

## Brazil's First Astronaut Is Awarded Brazilian Highest Honor

Contributed by Yara Aquino  
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The Brazilian astronaut, Marcos Pontes, was acclaimed this Thursday, April 20, with the National Order of Merit (Brazil's most important medal), conferred by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Pontes received a great round of applause from Federal District public school students who attended the ceremony.

After reaffirming that the mission was a complete success in all respects, Pontes emphasized the importance of the experiments he conducted during the mission.

"All of them were extremely important, not just for the results but for their future impact."

The minister of Science and Technology, Sérgio Resende, pointed out that Pontes' space trip placed Brazil among the 15 countries that have a complete space program.

Pontes returned to Brazil with a schedule full of commitments. Until next Tuesday, April 25, when he will return to Moscow, he will attend various events and receive various homages.

Pontes spent the first week of April in space.

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