

Monaco Hosts Thanksgiving for NASA's 60th Anniversary with Legendary Astronauts

Monaco to Train and Send a Local to Space...

November 23, 2018 – MONACO -- Under the high patronage of H.S.H. Prince Albert II, the Embassy of Monaco in Washington D.C. assembled respected NASA alumni from the United States and France - including the second man to set foot on the moon, astronaut Buzz Aldrin - for a week of events focusing on the future of air and space travel.

NASA legends from the US space shuttle program -- including Captain Robert "Hoot" Gibson, former NASA Administrator General Charles Bolden, Dr. George "Pinky" Nelson, and pioneering woman astronaut, Dr. Rhea Seddon, as well as American space-walk record holder and veteran of three Space Shuttle missions and one ISS mission, Captain Michael López-Alegria, and aerospace experts Mr. Guy Beutelschies from Lockheed Martin, and Dr. Ilhami Aygun, president and CEO of SSI- MonacoSat – gathered to mark the agency's 60th anniversary and to kick off a space forum (www.MonacoEventsUSA.com) and special screening of Discovery's documentary "Above and Beyond: NASA's Journey to Tomorrow" from Academy Award nominee, Rory Kennedy.

At a press conference, the event's organizer, Monaco's Ambassador to the United States Maguy Maccario Doyle said the gathering highlighted the Principality's historical and visionary interest in aviation, aerospace technology and space exploration, given that SSI-Monaco, with partner Thales Alenia Space, launched its first communications satellite MonacoSat-1 with SpaceX's Falcon9 launcher into geostationary transfer orbit on April 27, 2015 and that a second satellite, MonacoSat-2, is being planned with an expected launch date by 2021-22.

"The Government of Monaco is committed to inspire the public and young people on the importance of space opportunities, in terms of research for the protection of the planet, its future, and that of humanity," said Maccario Doyle.

To underscore this commitment, Houston-based Axiom Space (www.axiomspace.com) and SSI-Monaco (www.ssi-monaco.com) announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), agreeing to cooperate toward training one or more citizens or residents of Monaco as professional or private astronauts, and to fly them on an orbital space mission. The flight would make the Principality on the French Riviera the 19th sovereign nation to send an astronaut to the International Space Station (ISS).

"We are thrilled to partner with SSI-Monaco to expand the global presence in low-Earth orbit," said Axiom Space CEO Michael T. Suffredini. "Axiom's unique ability to build indigenous astronaut selection and training capability to NASA standards will accelerate the development of Monaco's plans for human spaceflight and space research. We look forward to Monaco joining the human spaceflight community and substantial progress toward Axiom's vision of making living and working in space commonplace."

Once trained according to Axiom procedures, Monaco's astronaut(s) will be eligible for official assignment to ISS missions. The agreement additionally covers the possibility that the mission will instead fly to Axiom Station. The parties also agreed to study the long-term possibilities of space tourism in Monaco and a potential "Monaco Space Module" to be attached to Axiom Station – the world's first commercial space station – which is set to be constructed while attached to the ISS and later separate and operate independently.

Dr. Ilhami Aygun, President and CEO, SSI-Monaco, said: "In addition of being an honor for our company, this collaboration is a great step for Monaco to establish further its role in the international space community. Axiom is composed of all the great people who contributed to the success of the ISS missions, and now that the human spaceflights tend towards privately trained astronauts, we are proud to contribute to such prestigious project with the DNA of Monaco."

The organizers acknowledge the support of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation & the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation – USA, Lockheed Martin, Monaco Tourism and Convention Bureau (DTC), Monaco Asset Management, Space Systems International – MonacoSat, The Lady Monika Bacardi Foundation, and Venturi.

Press contact: Elle Berdy, Embassy of Monaco +1 917 689 7424, eberdy@monacodc.org