

# Brazil astronaut to do nano research

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Brazil's first astronaut, who is due to fly to the International Space Station at the end of March, will conduct nanotechnology research while in orbit.

Lt. Col. Marcos Pontes, speaking Wednesday at his first news conference ahead of the March 30 blastoff, said he was expected to conduct nine nanotechnology-related experiments and also would use the space station's photo and video cameras to monitor his country's territory.

Pontes, 42, will fly to the ISS under an agreement signed by the leaders of Russia's and Brazil's space agencies in October 2005. The Brazilian is undergoing training at a cosmonaut training center outside Moscow, the RIA Novosti news agency reported.

Pavel Vinogradov, Russian commander of the 13th expedition to the ISS, said he and U.S. astronaut Jeffrey N. Williams had "a long list of assignments" to perform during their six months in space, including numerous scientific experiments and two space walks apiece.

Pontes will spend a week on the space station, before returning to Earth with American William McArthur and Russian Valery Tokarev, the crew of the 12th expedition.

Brazil's first man in space said he believes in God and senses his compatriots' prayers for him.

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