

Former astronaut Robert Crippen is honored

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Former NASA Astronaut Robert Crippen was honored Wednesday night during a ceremony marking the 25th anniversary of the space shuttle's first flight.

Crippen, the pilot of that historic mission, was honored with the nation's highest award for spaceflight achievement: the Congressional Space Medal of Honor.

The award was presented by NASA Administrator Michael Griffin.

"This medal, awarded by the Congress of the United States, commemorates publicly what all of us who know Bob Crippen already understood: he is an authentic American hero," Griffin said. "He holds an unsurpassed record of dedicated service to this country as a military aviator, test pilot, engineer, and astronaut, including his assignment as pilot for the historic STS-1 mission ... We at NASA are honored by his association with our agency."

The Congressional Space Medal of Honor was authorized by Congress in 1969 to recognize "any astronaut who in the performance of his duties has distinguished himself or herself by exceptionally meritorious efforts and contributions to the welfare of the nation and mankind."

Past honorees include former Astronauts Neil Armstrong, Frank Borman, John Glenn, Alan Shepard, Judith Resnick and Virgil "Gus" Grissom.

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