

New NASA astronauts graduate, eyeing moon—and Mars

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Astronaut graduates from the United States and United Arab Emirates during a ceremony at the NASA Johnson Space Center.

After two years of rigorous training, ten Americans officially became astronauts on Tuesday, and are now eligible for planned NASA missions

to the International Space Station, the moon, and—if all goes well—to Mars.

Two Emiratis who trained alongside them also graduated Tuesday during a ceremony at the Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Members of the class, nicknamed "The Flies," were selected from more than 12,000 applicants in 2021 and their training included simulated spacewalking, robotics, space station systems, and more.

"You are here because you are exceptional," said NASA associate administrator Jim Free. We ask you to sit on the pointy end of a rocket and risk your life to advance our nation's goal to explore the unknown."

They include [fighter pilots](#), scientists, engineers, scientists and a doctor, and are drawn from both the military and civilian worlds.

Christina Birch, who holds a doctorate in [biological engineering](#), recalled the camaraderie the group developed during their time together.

"After a week in the Alabama back country during our survival training, when all the other MRE (ration) food ran out, we shared together one final bag of peanut M&Ms," she said.

"I know all of the Flies feel a great sense of responsibility and excitement for what comes next," she added. "We feel ready."

NASA immediately opened applications for its next class of astronauts, with a deadline to apply of April 2. Applicants must be US citizens, with a [graduate degree](#) in a science or technical field, or be at least two years into a doctorate, or hold a medical degree, or be enrolled in a test pilot school.

The salary is \$152,258—and the job listing advises remote work is not an option.

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