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NAMING HISTORY OF JAPAN'S SCIENTIFIC SPACECRAFT

Abstract

The way of naming of scientific spacecraft in Japan has been quite unique. The first satellite "OHSUMI" was named by Prof. Fumio Tamaki, the then leader of Japanese rocket development. He announced at the press conference just after the successful launch, "We name the satellite OHSUMI after the location of this launch center." It was the expression of the feeling of the launch team toward the people in Ohsumi Peninsula of Kagoshima Prefecture who had continued to encourage the launch team during the four consecutive launch failures before the success. The second satellite "TANSEI" (light blue) was named after the school color of the University of Tokyo which the rocket group belonged to in those days. From the third satellite, a ballot box was put at respective centers in the launch site around two weeks before the launch, and each member of the launch team took a vote on the name of a satellite to be born. A naming committee was organized to select a candidate for the official satellite name, and the committee met a few days before the launch to decide the name referring to the voting. The result was then announced at the first press conference after the successful launch. After the announcement, a former code name of the satellite was officially replaced by the newly announced name. The voting has sometimes been open to the public, for example, on the occasion of the launch of a solar observation satellite SOLAR-A just before the ISY (International Space Year) campaign. The voting resulted in the satellite name of "YOHKOH" (sun light). The story of the naming of scientific satellites/spacecraft in Japan has reflected the sense and the atmosphere of the times of respective launches, and it also reflects the way of treatment of such matters which has been loved by most Japanese people. This procedure for scientific spacecraft has been succeeded even after the consolidation into JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency) in 2003, when ISAS (the Institute of Space and Astronautical Science), who took over the responsibilities for the scientific spacecraft, became a part of JAXA. This paper describes all stories of naming of Japanese scientific spacecraft, including "HAYABUSA" (falcon).