

IAF HUMAN SPACEFLIGHT SYMPOSIUM (B3)
Governmental Human Spaceflight Programs (Overview) (1)

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SELECTING THE UAE'S FIRST ASTRONAUT: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Abstract

UAE Astronaut Programme was launched in April 2017 to develop the first Emirati Astronaut Corps. This program not only aims to send the first UAE Astronaut to the International Space Station (ISS), but also to have a sustainable human space flight program that contributes to the global missions and scientific discoveries. In addition to that, the program supports the country's vision of a future dependent upon a knowledge-based economy and promotes a culture of scientific endeavor in the UAE by inspiring new generations. Therefore, a team was dedicated to initiate and implement the selection process of UAE's first astronauts. This paper explains the different phases that the selection team went through in the selection process that includes a background study and several meetings with the main ISS partners, the Russian Space Agency (Roscosmos), NASA, and European Space Agency (ESA) to ensure the selection is conducted based on international standards. The first phase in the selection process started in December 2017 with call for applicants and a total of 4022 applications were received and filtered based on several assessments that included, medical, psychological, and interviews. By September 2018, the selection of two astronauts were announced: Hazzaa Al Mansoori and Sultan Al Neyadi. The two astronauts are being trained in Russia for the short duration mission and the prime astronaut will be launched to ISS on the 25th of September 2019 for 8 days. The paper concludes with a list of recommendations to overcome challenges and improve future selection processes as well as to support the implementations of similar human space flight programs in the region.