SPACE VEXILLOLOGY- Thirty Years After the First Moon Landing

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This year we celebrate the 3Oth anniversary of the first moon landing. Neil Armstrong, the first man to step on the moon on 21 July 1969, spoke the famous words: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" Together with Edwin Aldrin, he then hoisted the flag of the United States on the moon (Illustration 1). Succeeding Apollo missions also hoisted the Stars and Stripes.

The use of a f lag in space exploration began only after 1964—65. Following the Soviet-American missions of 1974—75, a flag was used in addition to the name of the country or agency responsible for the flight.

1. Launch Vehicles, Satellites, Spacecraft and Space Stations

The Soviet Union launched the first satellite, Sputnik, on 4 October 1957. Neither this satellite (Ill. 2) nor its launch vehicle show *any* sign of its country of origin. After the first successful satellite launch by the U.S.A., the Soviet Union began marking its spacecraft with the inscription CCCP (USSR) (Ill. 3). Until the breakup of the USSR, the Soviets used a flag on their space vehicles only in case of multinational programs. The name of the craft, e.g., Soyuz, Salyut, Mir, was normally shown in Cyrillic letters in addition to the inscription CCCP (Ills. 4—6). An exception was the Soviet space shuttle Buran, which is marked both with the Soviet flag and the inscription CCCP (Ill. 7). The satellite Cosmos 782, launched an 25 November 1975, is another exception (III. 8): The flags of member-countries of BION (Russian acronym for Investigation of the Effects of Space Flight an Living Organisms) – USSR, U.S.A., CSSR, France, Romania and Hungary, are painted on the bottom of the craft.

Russia first began to mark its spacecraft with the Russian flag with the flight of Soyuz in 1992 (Ill. 9). The Soviet satellites that landed an the moon, Mars or Venus had only the inscription CCCP. Different pennants (Russian: vympel) with typical Russian inscriptions were on board (Ills .10-12). The launch vehicles for Interkosmos satellites had only the Latin inscription INTERKOSMOS (Ill.13).

Developments in the United States were quite different. The first rockets had only the inscription of the responsible country or agency, e.g., United States, NASA, US Air Force (Ill. 14). The USAF rockets were additionally marked with the US Air Force roundel (Ill. 15). The spacecraft Gemini (Ill.16) was the first to show the US flag (first launch an 8 April 1964). The launch vehicle Saturn V has been regularly marked with the US flag since 9 November 1967 (Ill. 17). When foreign satellites were launched by the United States, the flag of the foreign country was indicated; for example, the launch vehicle Delta carrying the satellite Anik 1 was decorated with the Canadian flag (Ill. 18).

Very interesting are the images of the US flag an the space shuttle: an the left side of the shuttle the flag is shown normally, while the right side shows a mirror image with the canton at right (Ill. 19).

The French launch vehicles (Ill. 20) had the inscription CNES (Diamant, 26 November 1965). France's space engineering is the basis for the European launch vehicle Ariane. Ariane 1 an its first launch on 24 December 1979 already showed the standard ESA markings: the ESA logo and the flags of ESA members arranged in three rows (Ill. 21).

Japanese launch vehicles had the inscription Nippon and a paint surrounded by a thin red circle.
The Australian launch vehicle Sparta Redstone and the satellite WRESAT (launched an 29 November 1967) show a kangaroo (Ills. 22+23). As you can see, the kangaroo symbol is well established in Australia and may well be a contender as a component of any new Australian flag.

2. Cosmonauts and Astronauts

Juri Gagarin was the first man launched into space an 12 April 1961. The inscription CCCP appears an his helmet (Ill. 24). Soviet cosmonauts following Gagarin do not have a f lag an their space suits. Only with the start of the Soyuz-Apollo program in 1975 did Soviet cosmonauts start to wear the Soviet flag an their left sleeve. Above the flag is the inscription CCCP. Since 1978 many foreign cosmonauts came an board the space stations Salyut 7 and Mir (Ills. 25-27). They wore their country's flag an the left sleeve. Over the f lag was the country's name in the

respective language. Since 1992 the Russian f lag and the inscription РОССИЯ (Rossija) are used (Ill. 28).

The first American astronauts did not have a flag an their space suits (Ill. 29). During preparation for the moon landing, the astronauts started to wear the US flag an the left sleeve. Foreign hosts an board American spacecraft have two flags an their space suits: an the left sleeve the US flag and an the right sleeve their country‘s flag. Sometimes the country name is indicated above or beneath the flag (Ills. 30—32).

The euronauts working for ESA are an exception. They wear a black patch with the flags of all ESA members. These patches exist in three variants: With all flags arranged in several rows (the rule an board Soviet/Russian spacecraft, Ill. 33), or arranged in a circle or in an oval (the rule an board US spacecraft, Ill. 34).

3. Space Organizations

Soviet space organizations did not use a distinctive flag, to my knowledge. The successor Russian space organizations use the Russian flag. NASA its own flag – blue with NASA seal in the middle, was introduced on the 5th November 1959. NASDA use a white flag with the blue inscription NASDA. The former organization Interkosmos (USSR and other socialist countries) had a white flag with the colored Interkosmos logo in Cyrillic or Latin letters (INTERKOSMOS and ИНТЕРКОСМОС, Ill. 35) in the center. A variant of this logo has the inscription INTERCOSMOS.

The ESA has its own flag. When I asked ESA about its official flag, I received the following answer: A white flag with the ESA logo (in light blue, A.H.) in the center. However, on the official launch photographs one notices a medium—blue flag with a white ESA logo in the center (Ill. 34) , that is, precisely the reverse of the information given to me!

Commemorative First Day Envelopes issued during joint Space Shuttle-Mir missions showed two interesting flags: the Russian flag with the RKA logo and the US flag with the NASA logo (Ill. 37).

ABBREVIATIONS

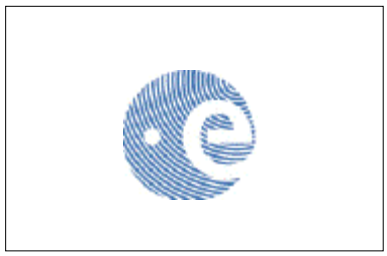
CCCP— Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)
CNES- Centre national d‘Études spatiales <France)
CSSR- Czechoslovakia
ESA- European Space Agency
ESRO- European Space Research Organisation
NASA- National Aeranautics and Space Administration (U.S.A.)
NASDA- National Space Development Agency (of Japan)
RKA- Rossiyskoye Cosmitcheskoye Agentsvo (Russian Space Agency)
SKYLAB- Sky Laboratory
USAF- United States Air Force
WRESAT- Weapons Research Establishment Satellite

Space Vexillology

USA flag on the Moon

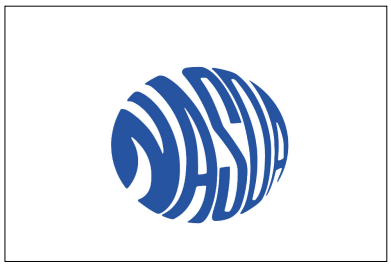
Astronaut Duque with blue ESA flag

Interkosmos flag



ESA flag

NASA flag



NASDA flag