



Press release



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CNES and NASA sign cooperation agreement on Mars 2020 mission

Tuesday 16 June at the 51st International Paris Air Show, CNES and NASA signed a cooperation agreement covering the SuperCam instrument for the Mars 2020 mission.

This agreement extends the successful work the two space agencies are already pursuing together to explore Mars with MAVEN and the Mars Science Laboratory (MSL) mission's Curiosity rover. The agreement signed by NASA Administrator Charles Bolden and CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall today defines the two agencies' respective responsibilities in designing and building the SuperCam instrument that will study the surface of Mars in all its geological diversity and detect any 'biosignatures'. SuperCam is a more-sophisticated and improved version of the ChemCam instrument operating since August 2012 on the Curiosity rover.

On 31 July 2014, NASA announced the selection of SuperCam along with six other instruments to equip the Mars 2020 mission's rover. This new instrument is the result of close scientific cooperation between teams led by Dr Roger Wiens at the U.S. Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and Dr Sylvestre Maurice at the IRAP astrophysics and planetology research institute in Toulouse, France, with a contribution from the team of Professor Fernando Rull at Valladolid University, Spain. IRAP and a consortium of six French laboratories will supply an optical and electronic unit plus spectrographs, to be placed at the end of the rover's mast.

The Mars 2020 mission will launch in July 2020 and land on Mars in February 2021. Initial surface operations are then scheduled to last until August 2023.

After the signature of the agreement, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "This agreement illustrates once again the close relationship of trust we have established with our U.S. counterparts. For more than 50 years now, each of the many missions we have accomplished together has marked a new step forward in space. After the MAVEN and MSL missions, and InSight to be launched in 2016, Mars 2020 will be another milestone in our exploration of Mars. With SuperCam, France will again be making a key contribution to this endeavour."

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