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**Press release**

## **ChemCam and SAM instrument teams, led by CNES, win award from NASA for exceptional contribution to Mars Science Laboratory mission**

At the Jet Propulsion Laboratory's 2013 NASA Honor Awards Ceremony on Thursday 10 October, JPL Director Charles Elachi presented an award on behalf of NASA to the French and U.S. teams who worked on ChemCam and SAM, for their exceptional contribution to the Mars Science Laboratory (MSL) mission. CNES is funding, managing and providing technical support for France's participation in MSL, through these two instruments developed by the IRAP astrophysics and planetology research institute and the LATMOS atmospheres, environments and space observations laboratory for the Curiosity rover.

This prestigious award commends both teams and each of their members for their outstanding achievement in defining the mission's science goals, developing the associated instruments and experiments, and in operating the instruments on Mars through the French Instruments Mars Operations Centre (FIMOC) in Toulouse and at JPL in Pasadena.

Mounted atop Curiosity's mast, ChemCam is the first laser-induced breakdown spectrometer (LIBS) in space and the first ever used on Mars. This instrument is designed to perform remote, in-situ analysis of Martian soil and rocks from at least seven metres away from its target, while also acquiring high-resolution imagery.

Located on the body of the rover, SAM-GC (Sample Analysis at Mars-Gas Chromatograph) is the French contribution to one of the mission's heaviest and most complex instruments. It analyses the molecular composition of soil samples acquired by the rover's robotic arm.

Reacting to the award, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall said: "I am very proud of this distinction that honours CNES and all of the partners involved in the ChemCam and SAM instruments, two cornerstones of the MSL mission's success. It demonstrates the expertise at CNES and French research laboratories and industry contractors. MSL is one of the greatest adventures of the start of this century and CNES is proud to be playing such a big part in its success."

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