Eagle (Armstrong): Houston, Tranquility base here. The Eagle has landed. Control: Roger, Tranquility. We copy you on the ground. You got a bunch of guys about to turn blue. We’re breathing again. Thanks a lot.... Eagle (Armstrong): Going to step off the LEM now. That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind. The surface is fine and powdery. I can pick it up loosely with my toe... I only go in a small fraction of an inch – an eighth of an inch – but I can see the footprints of my boots and the treads in the fine sandy particles... It’s quite dark in the shadow and a little hard for me to see, but I have good footing. I’ll work my way to the sunlight here without looking directly into the sun... It has a stark beauty all its own. It’s like much of the high desert of the United States. It’s different, but it’s very pretty out here.

To the moon and back

On the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, we look at how one small step for man was a giant leap forward for Arab space exploration.
Iran seizes 2 British tankers in Strait of Hormuz

The British tanker Stena Impero, owned by Stena Bulk. It showed the vessel's destination as the Saudi port of Jubail on the Gulf.

The map tracking the ship's course showed it veering off course with a sharp turn north at about 103 GMT on Friday and heading toward the Iranian coast.

The Stena company responded quickly to the news: "There are 23 seafarers aboard. There have been no reported injuries and their safety is of primary concern to both owners and managers. The priority of both vessels remains safety and welfare of all crew.

Director of the British ship management company, which operates the Stena Impero, said the seizure was a normal course of action as the vessel was reportedly involved in misappropriation of funds in the import of LNG that the agency says caused a loss of about $2 billion to the national exchequer. He is also being investigated for allegedly granting a 15-year contract for an LNG terminal to a "favorable" company. Alhabsi rejects the allegations.

Pakistan LNG case: Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi was remanded in the custody of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for 13 days, a day before he was arrested in a case involving a multibillion-rupee liquefied natural gas (LNG) import contract with Qatar.

Alhabsi, who is also the toe presid- ent of the opposition Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N), party, was presented before Judge Rftar Ahmed of an accountability court in Lahore. The case has been adjourned until Aug. 1.

Last year, the NAB ordered an inquiry into Alhabsi over alleged misappropriation of funds in the import of LNG that agency says caused a loss of almost $5 billion to the national exchequer. The NAB has also been investigating allegations of misappropriation of funds in an LNG import contract awarded to a company owned by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The case is pending in a court in Islamabad.

The decision comes as Pakistan is facing a severe energy crisis and is importing LNG to meet domestic demand.

Pakistan is currently receiving a supply of 100 million cubic feet per day of LNG from Qatar under a 15-year agreement at 11.27 percent of the Brent crude price.
‘I was 11. It felt weird seeing a human walk on the moon.’

Saudis recall watching in elation, disbelief and awe as history’s greatest TV event unfolded in their living rooms

It was a sleepy afternoon in Saudi Arabia when, days before the end of the school vacation, Saudis had their eyes glued to their TV sets as they waited for live coverage of the Apollo 11 moon landing.

Before July 20, 1969, the idea of a human walking on the moon was the stuff of science fiction. However, almost overnight, so it seemed, the idea of such an epoch-making event was the stuff of science fiction. It was a sleepy afternoon in the US state of Oregon at the university lecturer, was a student at the International Space Station (ISS) in September.

For months, Hazza Al-Mansoori, the latest Arab space traveler and want to give something back to my country."

Hazza Al-Mansoori, 36, who will conduct a tour of the ISS for two children, Laurie and Scott, aged six and four. "The family had just arrived in Saudi Arabia and headed to the Aramco compound in Ras Tanura in the Eastern Province. We were going through a culture shock," she told Arab News. "I wasn’t thinking of the moon landing, but we heard about it on the news from Dhahran. My kids tried to see the astronauts on the moon with their binoculars and said they could see them walking around.”

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50 years ago, on July 20, 1969, one of the most significant events in human history occurred. The moon landing opened a new era of exploration, and the idea of borders becoming obsolete.

As the world marks the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, Saudi Prince Sultan bin Salman, son of the king, talks exclusively to Arab News about how he became the first Arab, Muslim — and still the world’s only royal — in space. By Noor Naguli

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Before joining the space mission, Prince Sultan and his backup, Al-Bassam, led to undergo demanding physical preparation, including 14 hours of what NASA calls “habitatability” training — learning to adapt to the daily routines of life-in-a-space-shuttle. It takes anywhere between six to 16 months of intensive training to go into space, but the mission was moved up, so he had only 16 weeks to learn all the scientific and technical information, as well as the exercises for the task of a payload specialist. At the training the pair would last 16 hours a day, even during Ramadan when both men were fasting.

“When we started the training and started the mission, you know, it became evident that we had a lot of work to do, especially since our mission was scheduled for the winter and then pulled back to the summer,” Prince Sultan recalled. “So, time was compromised. We were asked whether we were ready to work double shifts.”

“The prince was undeterred and did not fear the challenges ahead. “These people are people who feel fear but still go forward,” he said.

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MISSION STS-51G

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As the second son of Saudi Arabia’s King Salman, Prince Sultan needs Arab News about how he became the first Arab, Muslim – and still the world’s only royal – in space.

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“The(Royal) who have traveled into space

IN NUMBERS

People who have traveled into space

Arabs who have traveled into space

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Saudi who has traveled into space

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The Arab Satellite Communications Organization, known simply as Arabsat, was founded in 1976 by the Arab League’s 21 member states. Based in Riyadh, and with Saudi Arabia as the main source of funding, it launched the first Arab satellites into space in 1985. Arabsat is the Arab world’s leading satellite service provider, beaming more than 500 TV and 250 radio channels, as well as multiple specialty channels, to 170 million viewers in the Middle East and North Africa.

Inspiration How the moon landing inspired a young prince

In Saudi Arabia’s capital Riyadh, a 13-year-old boy first heard of the historic moon landing via radio. After discussing the Apollo 11 mission at school, Prince Sultan could hardly wait to get back home to the palace to watch it on television. The picture quality might have been poor and the sound garbled, but footage of the landing captured his imagination.

“Humans made airplanes and made advances in industry, but for humans to leave their own planet, that’s really something else,” Prince Sultan said, sitting in his office in Riyadh.

As a young boy, the prince saw Saudi military students in Riyadh strap proudly in their uniforms and overcame himself alongside them. However, his dreams were put on hold when he was diagnosed with hemophilia. The illness kept him away from school for a year and made strenuous physical activity impossible for several years.

Traveling to the US to continue his studies in mass communications at the University of Denver in 1974, Prince Sultan was determined to realize his dream of flying. He took aviation lessons and gained his private pilot license in 1977 from the US Federal Aviation Administration.

At the time, space flight was not on his agenda, the prince revealed, after he “dismissed the impossible idea that somebody from the Saudi world” would venture into space.

However, following the Kingdom’s key role in the Arab League’s formation of Arabsat, a satellite communications company, in 1975, the impossible begun to seem possible.

Arabsat launched its first satellite, Arabsat-1A, on a French rocket in February 1985. With its second satellite, Arabsat-1B, ready to be launched the same year by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Arab League’s member countries were permitted to select a payload specialist to travel aboard the space shuttle Discovery. Saudi Arabia won the bid.

The search for the best candidate took months. Lacking the usual 13-months time frame for training, the selection was restricted to qualified pilots who spoke fluent English and were physically prepared for the rigors of space travel. After flying 1,500 hours and passing intensive medical examinations in Riyadh and the US, Prince Sultan was an obvious choice.

He asked his parents for permission to submit his name as one of the candidates and received their blessing.

NASA accepted two candidates — the primary payload specialist and a backup who would be trained to take over in the event of the primary astronaut was forced to drop out.

Prince Sultan was named the primary payload specialist. At 28, he would be the youngest astronaut on the crew.

“My Advisor of Radar Al-Bassam, an instructor on the Royal Saudi Air Force, was named as his backup. When he was chosen for the mission, Prince Sultan was working at the Saudi Ministry of Information. ‘I only transitioned to become a part of the Ministry of Defense, the Saudi Air Force, when we came back,’” he said.

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The mission Reading the Qur'an in space

Once the drama of lift-off had passed — and with seven days to conduct their experiments while they circled the Earth 111 times — it was time for the astronauts' real work to begin.

Eight hours after liftoff, the crew deployed Meroz, a Mexico's first commercial communications satellite. As a periodical specialist, Prince Sultan's main task was to oversee the deployment of Atlantis-1, which took place on June 6. Over the next 20 days, the crew used the shuttle's mechanical arm to deploy the Shatii Pointed Artistic Robotic Tool for Astronomy, which would map x-ray emissions in the universe. Another experiment involved the Strategic Defense Initiative of US scientists, which proposed a space-based laser defense system dubbed "Star Wars." Discovery carried a target that would be tracked by a laser beam from a test site in Texas.

Prince Sultan conducted other experiments aboard the shuttle and took photos of Saudi Arabia with a special camera attached to a mechanical arm, which was used to develop a ground-based evaluation system. Observing Earth from space was more than just a scientific experiment. It helped Prince Sultan realize that we are all connected. "The first day or so we all pointed to our countries. The second day we were pointing to our continents. By the fifth day, we were saying hello to each other, "Earth," he said.

Another touching gesture, remining Prince Sultan of our universal obligation to respect the Qur'an, came after Fabian was announced on the second day of their mission. Fabian presented the prince with the Malakah dates they had enjoyed together during Ramadan on Earth, saying: "This is your birthday today."" Stream antibiotics were reserved for sleep before being woken by mission control with daily music. On the sixth day, as a reward to Prince Sultan, they played a song by the Saudi singer Mohamad Abu.

Since Prince Sultan sleeps as little as five to six hours each day, he decided to use the spare time wisely, by reading the Qur'an. "I'm not saying I finished it, but I read very slowly because I didn't want to break it. I said, 'You know, I was really doing it for my father and mother, not for me myself.'"

In a teleconference broadcast on "Black Love," in which Fabian wished Prince Sultan a successful mission, his father, then governor of Mecca, appeared alongside the king, and talked to him about the Qur'an. "My father said: 'I hearded that on ETV that you finished that year, and he was very happy about it."

As for his mother, the prince knew he was in her prayers. In a rare interview, Prince Sultan Al-Saud said before the launch: "His father and I became sponsors of the event. We promised that his grandmother will say her prayers around the Kaaba as he flies around in space."

She did not have to wait long for her son in space. As of June 24, Johnson Space Center wrote in the astronauts' "Daily Log, morning, you all preparing to report to work."

That was a reminder for the astronauts to prepare for re-entry and a farewell to the shuttle program that brought the shuttle safely back to Earth. "That's the main thing," Al-Bassam said. "For us, it's the end of an era."

After passing over the Pacific Ocean, the shuttle re-entered the atmosphere at Edwards Air Force Base at 6:11 a.m. — a flawless landing after a 55-hour flight over the Atlantic Ocean, a drifty landing over the Mediterranean Sea and a safe landing over the Arabian Sea. "That was the most beautiful landing we've ever had," Al-Bassam said. "Our mission was actually flawless. Although, Prince Sultan said.

Missions in Space

STS-51G

- Mission: Read the Qur'an in space
- Launch: June 17, 1985
- Location: Kennedy Space Center
- Mission duration: 10 days, 19 hours, 17 minutes

Mission Control

- Arab News, July 20, 1997
- Al-Bassam, a Saudi aerospace engineer, was the leader of the mission.
- Prince Sultan Al-Saud, then director of the King Fahd Royal Palace, was the mission commander.
- Prince Fahd, Prince Abdul Aziz, and Prince bandar bin Sultan were the crew members.
- The mission was designated STS-51G, a designation used by NASA for all space shuttle missions.
- The mission was the first to be dedicated to the reading of the Qur'an in space, and it was carried out by Prince Sultan, who was a member of the royal family of Saudi Arabia.
- The mission was a joint venture between NASA and the Saudi Space Program.
- The spacecraft used was the Space Shuttle Discovery, which was launched from Kennedy Space Center.
- The mission was the first to use the new Space Shuttle program, which was designed to replace the Saturn V rocket used in the Apollo missions.
- The mission was considered a success, and it marked a significant milestone in the history of space exploration.

Mission Numbers

- 17 shuttle missions
- 44 discovery missions
- 1 million miles traveled

Mission Timeline

- Launch: June 17, 1985
- Landing: June 24, 1985
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Mission Details

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Mission Objectives

- Read the Qur'an in space
- Conduct scientific experiments
- Photograph Earth

Mission Achievements

- Successfully read the Qur'an in space
- Conducted scientific experiments
- Photographed Earth
- Successfully landed the spacecraft

Mission Challenges

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Mission Outcome

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Mission Lessons

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Mission Impact

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Mission Legacy

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Mission Conclusion

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Mission Aftermath

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We have long reached for the stars and beyond

Fifty years after the Apollo II moon landing, the UAE and Saudi Arabia are spearheading a new era of Arab space exploration, turning a centuries-old dream into reality.

By Ryan Ghasal

When you go up there, you realize there are no borders, no countries.

Just Earth. Mother Earth.

Abdulmohsen Faris, who now lives in Turkey and is first to walk on the moon, when he became the first Arab and Muslim to land on the moon, April 20, 1971.

Astronaut Hazza Al-Mansoori of the UAE, on his mission to the International Space Station in February 2019.

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