

FORECAST OF UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES -- JANUARY 2009

50 Years Ago - 1959

January 2: Lunik (Luna) 1 launched by Vostok rocket, 1702 UTC, Baikonur, USSR – the first space probe to escape Earth's gravity and become an artificial planet of the Sun.

January 12: NASA awards McDonnell Corp. the contract to manufacture the Mercury spacecraft.

45 Years Ago - 1964

January 21: Relay 2 launched by Thor Delta, 4:15 a.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

January 25: Echo 2 launched by Thrust Augmented Thor Agena, 8:59 a.m., EST, Vandenberg AFB.

January 29: SA-5 launched by Saturn 1, 11:25 EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla. First test flight of the new Block II vehicles.

January 30: Ranger 6 launched by Atlas Agena, 10:49 a.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

40 Years Ago - 1969

January 5: Venus 5 or Venera 5 launched by Molniya or Modified SS-6 (Sapwood) or Molniya rocket, 0629 UTC, Baikonur, USSR.

January 10: Venus 6 or Venera 6 launched by Molniya or Modified SS-6 (Sapwood) or Molniya rocket, 0546 UTC, Baikonur, USSR.

January 14: Soyuz 4 launched , 07:29:00 UTC, Baikonur, USSR by Soyuz rocket; piloted by Vladimir A. Shatalov. Rendezvous and docking with Soyuz 5. Crew exchange between spacecrafts.

January 15: Soyuz 5 launched by Soyuz rocket, 0726 UTC, Baikonur, USSR. Crew: Boris V. Volynov, Aleksei S. Yeliseyev, and Yevgeni V. Khrunov.

January 22: OSO 5 launched by Thor Delta, 11:48 a.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

January 30: ISIS-A launched by Thor Delta, 1:47 a.m., EST, Vandenberg AFB.

35 Years Ago - 1974

January 18: Skynet 2-A launched by Delta, 9:38 p.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

30 Years Ago - 1979

January 30: Scatha (STP 78-2) launched by Delta, Cape Canaveral, Fla. First spacecraft devoted primarily to studying the near-Earth environment.

25 Years Ago - 1984

January 25: President Ronald Reagan directed NASA to build an international space station "within a decade" in his State of the Union address.

15 Years Ago – 1994

January 8: Soyuz TM-18, a Russian passenger craft was launched from Baikonur Cosmodrome at 10:05 UTC, carrying three cosmonauts: Viktor Afanasyev, Yuri Usachev, and Valery Polyakov to the MIR station.

January 25: Clementine (USA Moon Orbiter) launched by Titan II-G from Vandenberg AFB at 8:34 a.m. PST. Clementine was a joint project between the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO, nee the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization, or SDIO) and NASA. The objective of the mission was to test sensors and spacecraft components under extended exposure to the space environment and to make scientific observations of the Moon and the near-Earth asteroid 1620 Geographos.

10 Years Ago - 1999

January 3: Mars Polar Lander launched by a Delta 2 rocket from Cape Canaveral at 20:21 UTC to search for near-surface ice on Mars. It was lost during its attempted landing on Mars, Dec. 3, 1999.

January 23: For the first time, scientists witnessed the visible light emitted by a gamma-ray burst, a mysterious explosion in the far reaches of the universe using NASA's Compton Gamma Ray Observatory and the Italian-Dutch satellite BeppoSAX.

5 Years Ago – 2004

January 3-24: Spirit landed on the red planet on January 3; its twin Opportunity landed three weeks later on January 24. Opportunity discovered evidence its landing site was once a standing body of water, raising the possibility key ingredients for life might have existed on Mars. In April, both rovers wrapped up their primary missions and went into overtime work.

January 14: President George W. Bush announces the Vision for Space Exploration which sets goals for returning U.S. astronauts to the Moon and eventually Mars.