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SRTM+10: 'Astro-log' from the past

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DLR's 'astro-log' writer: Gerhard Thiele

Ten years ago, on 11 February 2000, the Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) carried out an important 'mission to planet Earth': Space Shuttle Endeavour circled Earth with radar sensors developed in USA, Germany and Italy - capturing almost the entire planet's surface in 3D. On board was German astronaut Gerhard Thiele, who was penning a diary exclusively for the German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR). We are marking the tenth anniversary with a video showing the mission highlights, and by republishing Gerhard Thiele's day-by-day record under the title 'SRTM+10'; the 'astro-log' is available only in German.

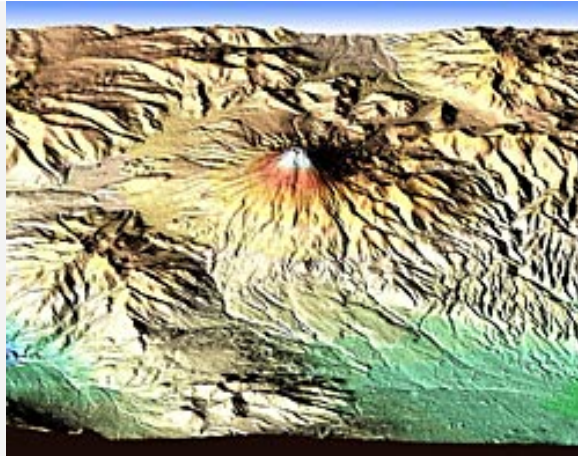
At the time, the public followed the astronaut diary via newspapers and online media. DLR's German Remote Sensing Data Center (Deutsches Fernerkundungsdatenzentrum; DFD) published the first 3D satellite images while the mission was still ongoing and they became quite popular.



Gerhard Thiele spent much of his free time familiarising interested persons with space: aside from his diary, he also answered 'space mail' during the mission. Out of the 6000 questions received, the DLR online editorial team filtered 20 questions for him to answer. These were emailed to the Space Shuttle from DLR via the Mission Control Center in Houston. From the Shuttle, Gerhard Thiele then answered questions by audio, and some even by video link. The questions ranged from topics such as "How do you sleep in zero gravity?" to "How can one become an astronaut?" and the application of the data obtained during the mission.



SRTM: Space Shuttle Endeavour in orbit



High-resolution SRTM image of the Andes

With the return of Space Shuttle Endeavour on 23 February 2000 at 00:22 CET, the Shuttle Radar Topography Mission ended successfully. For DLR, the mission's scientific data was also a great success - more than 113 million square kilometres of Earth were imaged with high precision. At the time, the so-called 'map of the 21st century' was created from these data.

The creation of the next generation of this map is about to begin, with the German TanDEM-X mission expected to launch later in 2010. In a tandem flight with the almost identical satellite TerraSAR-X, a 3D image of Earth of unprecedented accuracy will be created.

SRTM was a joint project of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA), the German Aerospace Center (DLR) and the Agenzia Spaziale Italiana (ASI).

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