



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

**Pioneering Astronaut General Thomas P. Stafford Dies at 93**

Yesterday we said farewell to General Thomas P. Stafford, one of our country's space pioneer elite. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Stafford was selected in NASA's second class of astronauts known as the "New Nine." He flew in space four times, spanning three space programs: Gemini, Apollo, and the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project.

In 1965, Stafford piloted Gemini 6, the first manned spaceflight rendezvous. In 1966, he commanded Gemini 9A, which was important for the validation of proposed docking techniques. In 1969, he commanded Apollo 10, which served as the dress rehearsal for Apollo 11, the first lunar landing mission. In 1975, he served as commander for the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, which marked the first international partnership in space, the first international human spaceflight.

After retiring from NASA, Stafford served as the commander of Edwards Airforce Base and as deputy chief of staff, research, development, and acquisition at the Pentagon. Even after his final "retirement," the General has continued to work in space relations between the United States and Russia, including the Shuttle-MIR program and the operations of the International Space Station until his death.

General Stafford remained an active supporter of the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation, serving as a member of the Board of Trustees for more than three decades. He could always be found at our signature events, holding court, educating everyone he spoke to on all things space.

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