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### ESA CHOOSES EUROPE'S FIRST SPACELAB CANDIDATES

The European Space Agency has selected four European candidates, one of whom will finally be chosen to fly as payload (experiment) specialist on the first Spacelab mission in 1980 together with one American payload specialist. The re-usable Spacelab is being built for ESA by nearly 40 firms in 10 European countries to be carried into earth orbit by NASA's Space Shuttle.

The four candidates, chosen from 53 from 12 European countries pre-selected last September, were presented at a press conference in Paris today (Thursday, December 22) :

- 1) Franco MALERBA (31), Italian engineer working in the computer field for the Digital Equipment Corporation in Milan ;
- 2) Ulf MERBOLD (36), German research scientist working at the Max-Planck-Institut für Metallforschung in Stuttgart ;
- 3) Claude NICOLLIER (33), Swiss researcher and pilot who has since 1976 been a visiting scientist at ESTEC, Noordwijk, (Netherlands) ;
- 4) Wubbo OCKELS (31), Dutch physicist doing research work and lecturing at Groningen University.

Among the last 12 in the running were candidates from Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain and Ireland in addition to the countries of the four finally selected.

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## SPACELAB TWO

It had been intended to select six candidates but because of the severe evaluation criteria which ESA chose to impose for what will be Western Europe's first manned space mission (i.e. the Level II criteria used by NASA to select permanent mission specialists but not specialists to be trained for one specific payload) only four were retained. The medical criteria eliminated eight of the final group of 12.

ESA's Director General, Mr. Roy Gibson, said that the severity of the selection procedure should not be allowed to obscure the high quality of the European candidates. It was particularly gratifying, he said, that the only woman among the 53 candidates made such an excellent showing.

By May 1978, three of the four candidates are due to be selected for appointment to the staff of ESA as European experiment specialists to undergo training for the first Spacelab flight. A few months before the flight, one of them will be chosen to become the first West European to travel and work in space. The two others will act as back-up specialists and will participate in ground-based mission activities.

On the first Spacelab mission about 70 experiments will be carried out in the fields of stratospheric and upper atmospheric physics, materials processing, space plasma physics, biology, medicine, astronomy, solar physics, earth observation, thermo-dynamics and lubrication. ESA's Spacelab Integration and Coordination in Europe (SPICE) organisation will manage European experiment training activities.

### NOTE TO EDITORS

NASA will also announce on December 22 its payload specialist candidates for the first Spacelab mission.