



## Fact Sheet: SpaceX Axiom Mission 2 (“Ax-2”) with Saudi Woman Astronaut

**Date:** June 5, 2023

*“I am very honored and happy to be representing all the dreams and all the hopes of all the people in **Saudi Arabia** and all the women back home.”*

- **Rayyanah Barnawi**, first Saudi woman in space

### Overview

On Sunday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, Axiom Space launched its second private mission, a 10-day trip to the International Space Station (“ISS”) where scientists conducted scientific investigations including weather experiments, mRNA testing, and DNA-based nanomaterials and cancer research. Ax-2’s second private mission, carried out successfully in association with SpaceX, concluded on Tuesday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, as the SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule splashed down safely in the Gulf of Mexico.



The crew of the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, with the Crew Dragon spacecraft, arrive at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, May 21, 2023. - AP Photo/John Roca

Among the crew were two **Saudi** nationals, mission specialist Ali AlQarni, the second male astronaut from the **Kingdom**, and biomedical scientist Rayyanah Barnawi, **the first Saudi woman** ever to travel to space. Barnawi's experiments on the station focused on breast cancer research. Axiom Space’s Director of Human Spaceflight Peggy Whitson, a former NASA astronaut and ISS commander, led the mission. Aviator and former racecar driver John Shoffner served as pilot.

This mission is the latest example of **Saudi Arabia’s** commitment to space exploration, technology innovation, and medical research as part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s Vision 2030. Over the years, the **Kingdom** has been working in close cooperation with U.S. space authorities and private companies including NASA, SpaceX, and Axiom.

### Legacy of Cooperation

The United States and **Saudi Arabia** have a long-standing relationship in space technology. In 1985, Prince Sultan bin Salman was one of the seven astronauts on board the NASA Space Shuttle Discovery: Mission STS 51-G, becoming the first Arab and Muslim in space. More recent collaborations include:

- During President Joe Biden’s visit to **Saudi Arabia** in July of 2022, Saudi Arabia and the United States signed 18 agreements relating to space, investment, energy, communications, and health.



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- At this meeting, the **Saudi Space Authority** signed onto the 2020 Artemis Accords, reaffirming its commitment to the responsible, peaceful, and sustainable exploration and use of outer space.
- In September 2022, Axiom Space and the Saudi Space Commission signed an MOU to cooperate on several space initiatives. Under the agreement, Axiom will train Saudi astronauts for human spaceflight and conducting scientific research in space.
- In 2010, The King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) signed two agreements with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for extended scientific cooperation and exchange of research between them.

### U.S. Official Response



We congratulate Axiom Mission 2, the first private mission of Saudi Arabia's national astronaut program, for successfully docking at the International @Space\_Station today. We also celebrate Rayyanah Barnawi's historic achievement as the first Saudi woman in space. Mabrouk!



10:59 PM · May 22, 2023 · 9,147 Views

*Adam Hodge, National Security Council Spokesperson*



Congrats to the first Saudi woman in space Rayyanah Barnawi, 🇸🇦 astronaut Ali al-Qarni, & U.S. astronauts Peggy Whitson and John Shoffner who traveled to @Space\_Station to further scientific collaboration and build on 🇸🇦 joining the Artemis Accords during last year's @POTUS visit.



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*Matthew Miller, State Department Spokesperson*