

ASTRONAUT BIOGRAPHY



National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
Houston, Texas 77058

May 2022



Raja Chari

(Colonel, U.S. Air Force) NASA Astronaut

Summary:

Raja Chari was selected by NASA to join the 2017 Astronaut Candidate Class. He reported for duty in August 2017. The Iowa native graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1999 with a bachelor's degrees in Astronautical Engineering and Engineering Science. He continued on to earn a master's degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and graduated from the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School. He served as commander of the NASA SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the ISS, which launched on November 10, 2021. NASA's SpaceX Crew-3 astronauts aboard the Dragon Endurance spacecraft safely splashed down Friday, May 6, 2022, in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Florida, completing the agency's third long-duration commercial crew mission to the International Space Station. The international crew of four spent 177 days in orbit.

Personal Data:

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Chari was raised in Cedar Falls, Iowa. He is married to Holly Schaffter Chari, also a Cedar Falls native, and the couple has three children.

Education:

Graduated from Columbus High School in Waterloo, Iowa. Earned a bachelor's degree in Astronautical Engineering from the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado. Earned a master's degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Graduated from the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School in Patuxent River, Maryland. Graduated from US Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Experience:

At the time of his selection in June 2017, Chari was a Colonel select in the U.S. Air Force, serving as the Commander of the 461st Flight Test Squadron and the Director of the F-35 Integrated Test Force. He has accumulated more than 2,500 hours of flight time in the F-35, F-15, F-16, and F-18 including F-15E combat missions in Operation Iraqi Freedom and deployments in support of the Korean peninsula.

NASA Experience:

Chari reported for duty in August 2017 and completed two years of training as an Astronaut Candidate. He then served as the Director of the Joint Test Team for the NASA Commercial Crew Program. He served as commander of the NASA SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the ISS, which launched on November 10, 2021. NASA's SpaceX Crew-3 astronauts aboard the Dragon Endurance spacecraft safely splashed down Friday, May 6, 2022, in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Florida, completing the agency's third long-duration commercial crew mission to the International Space Station. The international crew of four spent 177 days in orbit.

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Awards/Honors:

Awarded the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Aerial Achievement Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Air Force Achievement Medal, an Iraq Campaign Medal, a Korean Defense Service Medal and the Nuclear Deterrence Operations Service Medal. Named distinguished graduate from the US Air Force Academy, Undergraduate Pilot Training, and the F-15E Formal Training Unit.