

ASTRONAUT BIOGRAPHY



National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
Houston, Texas 77058

July 2026



Deniz Burnham

NASA Astronaut

Summary:

Deniz Burnham was selected by NASA to join the 2021 Astronaut Candidate Class. She reported for duty in January 2022. A former intern at NASA's Ames Research Center, she earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of California, San Diego, and a master's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Burnham is an experienced leader in the energy industry, having managed onsite drilling projects on oil rigs for over a decade, including the Arctic in Alaska, Northern Alberta in Canada, and Texas. Burnham served in the U.S. Navy Reserves as an Engineering Duty Officer. She is a licensed private pilot with the following ratings: airplane single engine land and sea, instrument airplane, and rotorcraft-helicopter. Burnham is currently training for her first mission to the International Space Station, launching aboard the Roscosmos Soyuz MS-30 spacecraft alongside cosmonauts Dmitri Petelin and Konstantin Borisov.

Personal Data:

Born at Incirlik Air Base in Adana, Turkey, Burnham frequently moved as a result of being raised in a military family. She resided in Wasilla, Alaska at the time of her selection as a NASA astronaut candidate. Her parents are Sahver Burnham of Fairfield, California and Ed Burnham (deceased). Burnham enjoys flying as a private pilot and holds helicopter, fixed wing (land and sea), and instrument ratings. She also flies paramotors and paragliders. She and her husband, Shaun Little, enjoy exploring the outdoors and riding motorcycles.

Education:

Graduated Vanden High School in Fairfield, California. She earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of California, San Diego, in 2007. Earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, in 2017.

Experience:

At time of her selection as a NASA astronaut candidate, Burnham had spent more than a decade in the energy industry where she worked as the onsite company representative and managed drilling optimization projects and emission reduction strategies for drilling rigs. She began her career as a field engineer on a remote oil rig in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska. As a lead field engineer, she was responsible for all aspects of the measurement and logging while drilling operations at drilling rig sites throughout the Arctic. In 2011, Burnham was selected for a 15-month intensive training and evaluation program in preparation for an on-site leadership position as a drilling Well Site Leader where she trained in various locations throughout Wyoming and Texas. She went on to lead onsite operations for about nine years on drilling rigs in Canada, Ohio, and Texas. Burnham served in the U.S. Navy Reserves as an Engineering Duty Officer.

NASA Experience:

As a graduate student at USC, Burnham completed an internship with the NASA Ames Research Center as part of the Deployable Autonomy Technologies group.

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