



Media only: Marc Sklar (202) 633-2375; sklarm@si.edu
Alison Mitchell (202) 633-2376; mitchellac@si.edu

Oct. 23, 2019

Media website: <http://newsdesk.si.edu>

Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum Receives SORATO Lunar Rover for Future Museum Exhibition

The National Air and Space Museum has received SORATO, a lunar rover built by Japanese aerospace company ispace’s Team HAKUTO, one of the five finalists of the Google Lunar X Prize competition. The tested and flight-ready rover will eventually be displayed in the “Future of Spaceflight” exhibition, scheduled to open in 2024 as part of the museum’s seven-year renovation.

“This rover represents the role of private prizes in stimulating entrepreneurship in the aerospace industry,” said Matthew Shindell, space history curator at the museum. “It will tell an important piece of the story of modern spaceflight and exploration in the future gallery.”

The rover, which is the smallest and lightest space-qualified rover in the world, is equipped with four wheels, mobility to traverse difficult terrain, 360-degree high-definition video and photo capabilities, solar cells angled to maximize power generation, the ability to conduct detailed terrain mapping and capacity to carry customer payloads to the lunar surface.

Team HAKUTO spent the better part of a decade building the lunar rover, most of which was carried out by a small team working on a volunteer basis. However, over time, the team gathered a strong support base of partners, investors and pro bono members, and a supporter’s club reaching into the thousands. Had the Google Lunar X Prize not been canceled, ispace planned to launch SORATO in 2018, and it would have had to travel at least 500 meters on the lunar surface and transmit visual data back to Earth in order to claim the prize. The success of SORATO in the competition proved to be a launching pad for ispace, which recently raised record funding to build a lunar lander that will carry rovers to the moon as part of the company’s private lunar missions. By 2023, ispace aims to deploy rovers on the lunar surface based on the original design of SORATO.

“We are honored to donate our lunar rover SORATO to the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum,” said Takeshi Hakamada, founder and CEO of ispace, and team leader for Team HAKUTO. “Although the Google Lunar X Prize competition ended without a winner, it propelled the

private space industry, and especially the lunar exploration industry, to a new height. I hope SORATO will be seen as a symbol of the dawn of private space exploration for future generations who visit the museum.”

To learn more about the transformation of the museum’s building on the National Mall, visit airandspace.si.edu/reimagine.

The National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., is located at 655 Jefferson Drive S.W. The Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center is located in Chantilly, Virginia, near Washington Dulles International Airport. Both facilities are open daily from 10 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free, but there is a \$15 fee for parking at the Udvar-Hazy Center.

###