

Sky-watching station begins with a big bang

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The ground control center of the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer (AMS, 太空磁譜儀) set up by the Chung Shan Institute of Science and Technology (中科院, under the Ministry of National Defense) was inaugurated yesterday morning.

President Ma Ying-jeou applauded the Institute for its achievement, and also urged the Ministry of National Defense (MND, 國防部) to set up a training program to prepare personnel for related projects.

The control center was examined and certified by NASA on June 15. William H. Gerstenmaier, associate administrator for the Human Exploration and Operations Directorate at NASA Headquarters, congratulated Taiwanese officials on behalf of the U.S., saying that Taiwan should be “very proud” of this monumental achievement.

The AMS is an experiment module designed to measure cosmic rays in the universe. By measuring cosmic rays, scientists intend to learn more about the formation of the universe.

Chung Shan Institute of Science and Technology is the primary research and development institution of the Ministry of National Defense's Armament Bureau.

The Defense Ministry has trained six alternative service conscripts (with master's degrees in science and technology) for the AMS project. The conscripts are to join the control center by the end of the year.

Taiwan has maintained a policy for military conscription since 1949; however, a gradual process to remove compulsory service began in 2010. The government plans to end conscription by 2014. If the plan succeeds, Taiwan's military will consist of an all volunteer force in the future.

Without military conscription, the MND will have to train its own personnel for projects such as the AMS program.

At the opening ceremony of the control center, President Ma emphasized the necessity of setting up a training program to ensure that the military has sufficient personnel (for the maintenance and development of projects like the AMS program) in the absence of conscripts.



President Ma Ying-jeou, left, shakes hands with a member of the AMS (Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer) ground control center inaugurated in Taoyuan, yesterday. The AMS is an experiment module designed to measure cosmic rays. By doing so, scientists hope to learn more about the formation of the universe. (CNA)

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2012/07/04/346479/Sky-watching-station.htm>