

A close-up photograph of Claudie Andre-Deshays, France's first woman in space, wearing a black space helmet and white gloves. She is looking slightly to the side with a focused expression. In the background, a man in a blue uniform is partially visible.

Today in History

August 17, 1996

▲ **France's first woman in space, Claudie Andre-Deshays, took off from the Baikonur cosmodrome for a 16-day mission aboard Russia's Mir space station**

1877: American astronomer Asaph Hall discovered the first of the two small moons of Mars

1945: Dr Sukarno, who led efforts to resist Dutch re-colonization after World War II, declared Indonesia independent from the Netherlands

1996: Ruth Perry of Liberia became Africa's first woman head of state

2001: The Ford Motor Company cut 5,000 jobs, evidence that America's long economic boom was ending