

## ***Former Pilots: Mark E. Pestana***



Mark E. Pestana  
*Credits: NASA Photo*

Prior to his retirement in January 2013, Mark Pestana was a research pilot and project manager at NASA's Dryden (now Armstrong) Flight Research Center, Edwards, CA. He piloted the B200 King Air, the T-34C, and the remotely piloted Ikhana/Predator B. He also served as a flight test engineer on the Center's F/A-18 Hornet aircraft and as a flight engineer and mission manager on the DC-8 flying laboratory. Pestana accumulated more than 5,000 hours of military and civilian flight experience.

Pestana was project manager and pilot for the Hi-rate Wireless Airborne Network Demonstration flown on NASA's B200 research aircraft. He also flew the B200 for the X-38 Space Integrated Inertial Navigation Global Positioning System experiment. Pestana participated in numerous deployments of the DC-8 on missions involving hurricane research, ozone studies, atmospheric chemistry, rain forest health, ice pack assessment, and volcanic and tectonic activity.

He came to Dryden in June 1998 from NASA's Johnson Space Center, Houston, where he served as the Earth and Space Science discipline manager for the International Space Station Program. Pestana also served as a flight crew operations engineer in the astronaut office. He led the analysis and technical negotiations for modification of the Russian Soyuz spacecraft as an emergency crew return vehicle for space station crews.

Before joining NASA in 1994, he was a flight crew operations engineer with Barrios Technology Inc., Houston.

Prior to 1990, Pestana was on active duty with the U.S. Air Force as the director of mission planning for the Department of Defense Space Test Program, testing developmental spacecraft systems on the Space Shuttle and Department of Defense satellites.

Pestana was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Force through the Reserve Officer Training Corps. As an Air Force pilot, Pestana flew T-38s, KC-135 tankers, and RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft. He logged more than 200 combat intelligence sorties.

He joined the U.S. Air Force Reserve in 1991. During his last assignment he was the assistant chief of safety for the Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards Air Force Base, CA. In this capacity he flew C-12 aircraft as a safety chase pilot for the CV-22 Osprey flight test program. He retired from the Air Force Reserve with the rank of colonel in 2005.

Pestana earned a bachelor's degree in natural sciences from Loyola University, Los Angeles, in 1975. He earned a Master of Science in Systems Management/Research and Development from the University of Southern California in 1988.

**September 2017**

Source- <https://www.nasa.gov/centers/armstrong/news/Biographies/Pilots/bd-dfrc-p039.html>

***Last Updated: Sept. 13, 2017***  
***Editor: Yvonne Gibbs***