

2016 Montgolfier Diploma Nomination

Troy Bradley and Leonid Tiukhtyaev

Category: Best Sporting Performance in previous year – Gas Ballooning



Nominees

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Awards Chair for the
Balloon Federation of America

Citation

Troy Bradley and Leonid Tiukhtyaev are being nominated for the Montgolfier Diploma, by the Balloon Federation of America. The basis for this award is their epic, record setting gas balloon flight across the Pacific Ocean, which occurred in January, 2015. This flight set new world records for both distance and duration for gas balloons.



Troy Bradley and Leonid Tiukhtyaev lifted off from Saga, Japan the morning of January 24th at 0623 local time (21:23Z) and landed just off the coast of Baja California, Mexico the morning of January 31st at 0657 local time (13:57Z). The flight lasted over 160 hours and covered over 10,700 km (6600 statute miles).

Troy planned this adventure carefully and over an extended period of years. The equipment for this flight has been underway for a number of years. The helium gas envelope was built in 2004 by Bert Padelt and sat idle for the ensuing years. The capsule was developed by a composites manufacturer in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2005. The equipment was in hand but the flight awaited a capable co-pilot, operational funds and and just the right weather patterns to project success. This finally came together this year and the final preparations were underway.

A team of experts was assembled in all phases of the flight. The weather was of paramount importance and Luc Trullemans of Belgium was enlisted to participate. The Mission Control, established at the Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum, was directed by Dr. Steven Shope and staffed by capable air-traffic-control professionals as well as flight tracking experts. Saga, Japan was selected on the strengths of the ballooning community and the willing volunteers who prepared for flight multiple times. Bert Padelt and Tim Cole made on-site visits to Saga to assure the airworthiness of the system.

Troy and Leonid commented many times that this balloon required virtually constant attention to maintain the flight profile needed for success. This was most evident as they approached Baja California and the landing phase of this difficult flight. Maintaining a well-controlled rate of descent they made a safe landing in the water just four miles off the coast with precipitation and cumulus clouds not far away to the southeast.

This nomination reflects the monumental tasks of imagination, planning, team leadership and pilot skills in achieving a notable flight that puts new records in the books . . . records which are likely to stay for many years.