

ISS Crew Celebrate Fifth Anniversary Of Station, Prepare For Nov 7 EVA

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Last week, Commander Bill McArthur and Flight Engineer Valery Tokarev checked the clothes, tools and plans they will use during a five and one half-hour spacewalk set for Nov. 7.

McArthur and Tokarev will mark five years of continuous human presence on the international space station Nov. 2. They are the 12th station crew. The first station crew, Commander Bill Shepherd, Flight Engineers Sergei Krikalev and Soyuz Commander Yuri Gidzenko, arrived at the complex on Nov. 2, 2000.

Originally the size of an efficiency apartment, the station has grown to a volume larger than the average three-bedroom house, equipped with the most sophisticated laboratory ever to fly in space.

The station is functioning as a test bed for technologies, procedures and human endurance that will allow future, longer space journeys.

McArthur and Tokarev sent an anniversary greeting lastweek to the prior station crews and to the thousands who support the station in 16 nations.

On Tuesday, the crew performed a checkout of the spacesuits they will wear for their spacewalk. The spacewalk will be the first from the station to use U.S. spacesuits and originate from the Quest Airlock since April 2003.

The crew will install a TV camera on the station's port side truss. The camera will be an important aid during future assembly work They also

plan to remove an experiment from the top of the P6 truss, the station's highest point. The experiment measured the electrical environment around the exterior of the station.

On Wednesday, the crew tested procedures to put on and take off spacesuits, reviewed plans and conferred with spacewalk specialists on the ground. Thursday they suited up and rehearsed the activities inside the station they will perform outside. The spacewalk will begin about 9:30 a.m. EDT with coverage on NASA TV beginning at 8:30 a.m. EDT, Nov. 7.

All station systems are operating well. The Elektron oxygen-generating system, one of several methods of replenishing oxygen in the station cabin atmosphere, is functioning. It was restored to operation Saturday, when Tokarev performed a maintenance procedure to purge air bubbles from its systems.

Russian flight controllers completed a test firing of thrusters on the Progress cargo craft on Wednesday. The thrusters shut off early the previous week during a planned reboost of the complex.

The thrusters were fired using a different manifold, as Russian controllers continued to evaluate a loss of data from the system observed during the aborted reboost. During the test firing, the engines operated normally. They are planned for use during the next reboost of the station on Nov. 10.

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