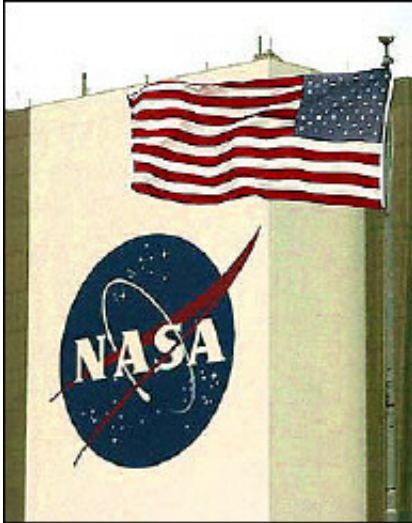


NASA announces lift-off, budget cuts

March 27 2006



The 13th crew of the International Space Station was set to lift off Wednesday aboard a Russian rocket from Kazakhstan.

During their 6-month mission, Expedition 13 Cmdr. Pavel Vinogradov of Russia and NASA ISS science officer Jeffrey Williams of the United States will be joined by European Space Agency astronaut Thomas Reiter. His arrival will restore the station crew to three members for the first time since May 2003.

To help cover the cost of completing the ISS, NASA is cutting its science budget by more than \$3 billion, The Chicago Tribune reported,

as well as canceling numerous ISS experiments that had been planned to help future astronauts survive long-duration space flights to the moon, Mars and beyond. The agency is also eliminating funding for hundreds of university researchers across the nation.

One critic of the budget slashing, Simon Ostrach, an emeritus professor of engineering at Case Western Reserve University, told the Tribune, "Fifteen or 20 years from now, NASA will have a space station and vehicles to go to Mars -- and no researchers to answer the questions of what we do when we get there."

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