NASA Set to Launch Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter in 2008

May 18 2006

After successful completion of its mission confirmation review on Wednesday, May 17, NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter project has been given the authority to proceed to the implementation phase.

The confirmation review represents NASA's formal decision for authorizing additional work and sets the project's cost estimate. The mission was deemed to be within budget and on schedule to launch in October 2008.

After a 30-year hiatus, the orbiter represents NASA's first step towards returning humans to the moon. The spacecraft will spend an unprecedented year mapping the moon from an average altitude of approximately 30 miles. It will carry six instruments and one technology demonstration to conduct investigations specifically targeted at preparing for future human exploration.

The orbiter is being built at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md. The instruments are being provided by various organizations throughout the U.S. and one in Russia. The instruments will generate a global map of the moon; to determine which potential landing sites are free from hazards; to measure light and temperature patterns at the moon's poles; to search for potential resources, such as water; and to assess the deep-space radiation environment and its potential effects on humans.

The next spacecraft milestone is the critical design review, scheduled for

later this year. This review represents the completion of detailed system designs and marks the transition into the manufacturing, assembly, and integration phase of the mission development cycle.

Source: NASA