

Space Shuttle Closer to Launch

February 14 2007



Atlantis is lowered to meet the external tank and solid rocket boosters. Photo credit: NASA/Amanda Diller

Space Shuttle Atlantis was mated to the orange external tank and twin solid rocket boosters last week. The entire assembly is stacked on the mobile launcher platform and is targeted to roll out to Launch Pad 39A on February 15.

The rollout marks the next milestone for Mission STS-117 and will be the first launch from Pad 39A in four years.

The flight of Space Shuttle Atlantis to the International Space Station on mission STS-117 has been targeted for March 15, a day earlier than originally planned.

On the next space shuttle flight to continue constructing the station, the Atlantis crew will install a new truss segment, retract a set of solar arrays and unfold a new set on the starboard side of the station. Lessons learned from two previous missions will provide the astronauts with new techniques and tools to perform their duties.

Commanding the Atlantis team is Frederick Sturckow, a veteran of two shuttle missions (STS-88, STS-105), while Lee Archambault will be making his first flight as the shuttle's pilot. Mission Specialists James Reilly (STS-89, STS-104) and Patrick Forrester (STS-105) will be returning to the station. Steven Swanson and John Olivas, both mission specialists, join the crew for their first flight into space.

The mission astronauts will return to Kennedy a few weeks before liftoff to participate in the Terminal Countdown Demonstration Test. During this time they will practice launch activities, safety exercises, inspect the payload and conclude with a simulated main engine cut-off exercise.

Source: NASA

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