# NASA to Rotate Station Astronauts on Next Shuttle Mission

April 26 2007

After several months working aboard the International Space Station, NASA astronaut Suni Williams will come back to Earth aboard the space shuttle Atlantis, targeted for launch June 8. That shuttle mission, STS-117, will carry her successor, astronaut Clay Anderson, to the station to begin his duty as an Expedition 15 flight engineer.

The exchange of Anderson and Williams was originally planned for the STS-118 mission, now targeted for launch in August. However, that flight, first set to fly in June, had to be postponed after an unexpected hail storm damaged Atlantis' external fuel tank and delayed STS-117.

NASA managers approved the crew rotation Thursday morning after a more detailed review determined there would be no impact on space station operations or future shuttle mission objectives. Since an earlier crew rotation was possible, NASA managers decided it would be prudent to return Williams and deliver Anderson sooner rather than later.

With the new plan, Williams' mission on the station will be approximately the same length as originally anticipated. Williams, a Massachusetts native, launched to the station Dec. 9, 2006, aboard the space shuttle Discovery as part of the STS-116 mission. During her stay, she set a record for spacewalks by a female astronaut by conducting four excursions for a total of 29 hours and 17 minutes. Upon Williams' return, she will have accumulated more time in space than any other woman.

Anderson, a Nebraska native, makes his first spaceflight when he joins Expedition 15. Discovery is scheduled to bring him home during the STS-120 mission, targeted for launch Oct. 20.

Source: NASA