

Jules Verne dry cargo prepared in Turin

October 9 2007



One of two Jules Verne manuscripts are included in the European dry cargo. ATV Cargo Bench Review held at Thales Alenia Space Italia, in Turin, Italy, on 3 October 2007. The review is last chance to check the 180 kg of European dry cargo which will be carried into space on board Jules Verne, the first Automated Transfer Vehicle. The cargo will now be shipped to the launch site in Kourou, French Guiana. Credits: ESA

Around 180 kg of dry cargo which is to be carried into space on board Jules Verne, the first Automated Transfer Vehicle, is currently undergoing final preparation in Turin, Italy, ahead of shipment to the launch site in Kourou, French Guiana.

The cargo items which will be on board the inaugural flight of the European-built Automated Transfer Vehicle (ATV) when it docks with the International Space Station (ISS) early next year include spare parts for the European Columbus laboratory and the ATV itself. One of the cargo items is an air-exchange duct which is needed for immediate instalment inside the ATV following first ingress into the European cargo spacecraft.

The European dry cargo also contains several PR items, such as a luxury 19th century edition of the book 'De la Terre à la Lune' (From the Earth to the Moon) and two original manuscripts on space and astronomy, all of which were written by visionary author and namesake of the first ATV, Jules Verne. Also destined for the ISS is the winning music playlist of the ATV kids' competition and 500 Jules Verne ATV mini-books.

In a final step before the cargo is ready for shipment, a so-called Cargo Bench Review took place on 3 October at the premises of Thales Alenia Space Italia in Turin, Italy. "The review is a last chance for all packaged cargo items to be checked before they are shipped to Kourou," explains Mike Steinkopf, ESA's ATV-Jules Verne Cargo Manager.

In attendance at the review were NASA astronaut Marsha Ivins and ESA astronaut Roberto Vittori. As crew representatives, Ivins and Vittori were present in Turin to check that all packaging has been done according to crew requirements; for example, that there are no sharp edges, that the packaging can be easily removed and that all items are easily identifiable and properly labelled.

Taking into account the remarks made during the review, the team at Thales Alenia Space Italia will now prepare the cargo for shipment to Kourou late this week. "The review is a major milestone for the team – we have worked hard to come to this point," says Steinkopf.

Once the cargo items arrive in Kourou, following an external inspection the Cargo Transfer Bags will be placed in storage ready for installation into Jules Verne ATV's Integrated Cargo Carrier (ICC) in early November.

A further 1020 kg of dry cargo, including crew provisions, food and Orbital Replacement Units for the ISS, has been under preparation at NASA's Johnson Space Center, in Houston, and at Kennedy Space Center, in Florida. The NASA cargo has also been subjected to bench reviews and was shipped to Kourou a few days ago.

Source: European Space Agency

Citation: Jules Verne dry cargo prepared in Turin (2007, October 9) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-10-jules-verne-cargo-turin.html>

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