

Discovery Nears February Launch to Station

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At Kennedy's Launch Pad 39A the open doors of the payload canister reveal the S6 integrated truss structure and U.S. solar arrays for the STS-119 mission.

Photo credit: NASA/Chris Rhodes

(PhysOrg.com) -- Space shuttle Discovery's installation to its external fuel tank and solid rocket boosters was completed Sunday afternoon.

The shuttle stack atop the mobile launcher platform is scheduled to roll out to Kennedy Space Center's Launch Pad 39A at 4 a.m. EST Jan. 14.

The 3.4-mile journey from the Vehicle Assembly Building to the launch pad aboard NASA's crawler-transporter will take about six hours.

Discovery's cargo, the S6 truss segment and solar arrays, was transferred to the pad Sunday and is being lifted into the pad's changeout room today. The equipment will remain there until the shuttle arrives and it's loaded into the payload bay.

At NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, the STS-119 astronauts are rehearsing in the fixed base simulator. The crew spends many hours training with dials and controls identical to that of the shuttle computer and screens that animate the view from outside the shuttle's window. Johnson technicians program the simulator's software to throw various problem situations at the crew to make sure they can cope with anything while in flight.

Provided by NASA

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