

Astronauts pack Buzz Lightyear for ride home

September 7 2009, By MARCIA DUNN , AP Aerospace Writer



In a photo provided by NASA, European Space Agency astronaut Christer Fuglesang, STS-128 mission specialist, participates in the mission's third and final session of extravehicular activity (EVA) Saturday, Sept. 5, 2009, as construction and maintenance continue on the International Space Station. (AP Photo/NASA)

(AP) -- The astronauts aboard the orbiting shuttle and station packed up Buzz Lightyear on Monday for the ride home from "infinity and beyond."

The 12-inch action figure has been at the international space station for more than a year.

Mission Control asked Discovery's crew to do a final check to make certain Buzz was safely stowed on the shuttle, in advance of the closing of the hatches between the linked [spacecraft](#) late Monday night. The

shuttle will depart Tuesday.

The Buzz Lightyear toy had kept a relatively low profile at the space station since its June 2008 arrival, but was pulled out for extensive filming over the past week. Some of the movie scenes: Buzz going to sleep with an astronaut who lets go, causing the doll to float away and hit a wall, and Buzz flying through a chamber followed by a real spaceman.

NASA said the video will be used in an educational outreach effort for children and have a "Toy Story" movie spin.

As for Buzz, a Walt Disney World spokesman said the toy will take part in "several debriefing sessions" and then a tickertape parade with Apollo 11 moonwalker Buzz Aldrin at the beginning of October. The spokesman said Buzz has become "the longest serving astronaut in space."

The 13 human astronauts had one last major job to accomplish together Monday before parting company.

A moving van holding a ton of trash and discarded equipment needed to be moved back aboard Discovery. It was delivered by the shuttle, fully loaded with supplies, and moved onto the international space station exactly one week ago.

In a series of Labor Day interviews, shuttle astronaut Jose Hernandez said his presence in space "means hope for all our people that speak Spanish." He grew up in a migrant worker family from Mexico.

"If you work hard and study hard, any dream can be achieved," Hernandez said in Spanish, "and I am the proof of that because I started (with) very little means."

The space station's new resident, Nicole Stott, said she's looking forward to gazing down at her home state of Florida and the rest of the planet over the next three months. She took up a watercolor kit to paint what she sees.

She said the artwork might not be that good, "but it will certainly be fun for me to try."

Stott flew up on Discovery as the replacement for Timothy Kopra, who has been in orbit since mid-July. Kopra will return to Earth on Thursday, along with the six other shuttle [astronauts](#) and, of course, Buzz.

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