

Shuttle, station crews seal hatches for departure

November 24 2009, By MARCIA DUNN , AP Aerospace Writer



This image made from NASA TV Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2009 shows the 12 space travelers aboard the orbiting shuttle-station complex during a news conference. Atlantis will undock from the space station on Wednesday. (AP Photo/NASA)

(AP) -- After nearly a week together, the crews of shuttle Atlantis and the International Space Station said goodbye Tuesday and closed the hatches between them.

Atlantis will undock from the space station before dawn Wednesday.

Astronaut Nicole Stott, leaving the station after three months, called for a "group hug" with her five former roommates. Then she embraced each one separately and, folding up her arms and legs, was pushed all the way into the shuttle like a big package. "Gentle," she urged, floating through

the hatch.

The men - six on the shuttle and five on the station - parted company with handshakes. "Good luck" and "nice trip to the ground, guys" filled the airwaves.

Like Stott, NASA's new dad in space, Randolph Bresnik, was eager to get home. Touchdown is set for Friday.

Bresnik said Tuesday he had no problems focusing on his job in orbit while awaiting his daughter's birth.

Abigail Mae Bresnik was born late Saturday, just hours after his first [spacewalk](#).

"Fortunately, I've got a little over 20 years of good Marine Corps training on compartmentalizing," Bresnik said during a crew news conference.

"We've been training long and hard for this mission. We know that the baby's been coming, so it was easy to go ahead and do our tasks," he said. It's a lot simpler to put thoughts aside when they're about a good thing, he added.

Bresnik said he wants to see his family as soon as possible after Atlantis lands. Wife Rebecca was figuring on waiting for him back home in Houston, with the baby. The couple also have a 3 1/2-year-old son.

Stott, meanwhile, was missing her husband and 7-year-old son, as well as being out in the sunshine.

"Pizza has been sounding really good," she told reporters. She's also craving a cola with crushed ice.

The shuttle crew's Thanksgiving meal will be nothing special, per commander Charles Hobaugh's wishes. Whatever is on the prepackaged menu that day will be fine, he said.

That means chicken fajitas, beef brisket, and sweet and sour pork.

"[Thanksgiving](#) isn't all about what you eat. It's the people you spend it with. This has become my second family," he said.

Besides, Hobaugh is expecting a tasty fried turkey when he gets home.

Atlantis delivered nearly 30,000 pounds' worth of big spare parts to the space station. The outpost is now 86 percent complete, with a mass of nearly 760,000 pounds, according to [NASA](#). Construction will wrap up, essentially, next year.

The space station will soon be even less crowded.

Three of the remaining five residents will return to Earth in a Russian Soyuz capsule next week. The remaining two occupants will hold down the orbiting fort until three more [astronauts](#) fly up in another Soyuz right before Christmas.

©2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Shuttle, station crews seal hatches for departure (2009, November 24) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-11-shuttle-station-crews-hatches-departure.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.