

# Intensive preparations for ATV freighter launch to Space Station

January 28 2011

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ATV Johannes Kepler mounted inside the CCU container for transport to the final assembly building (the BAF - Batiment d'Assemblage Finale) at Kourou on 20 January 2011. ESA's Nico Dettmann, Head of the ATV Production Programme, stands in front. Credits: ESA

(PhysOrg.com) -- The fuel and most of the cargo are loaded and ATV has been hoisted to the top of Ariane 5 as teams on four continents prepare for the 15 February launch of Johannes Kepler from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana.

With launch scheduled in just 18 days, experts from ESA, partner

agencies and industry teams are in the busy final stage of making Johannes Kepler ready for space.

Liftoff is set for 15 February at 22:07 GMT (23:07 CET) from Kourou. After eight days of orbital manoeuvres that will enable the Automated Transfer Vehicle (ATV) to synchronise its orbit with that of the [International Space Station](#) (ISS), the [cargo vessel](#) will dock on 23 February.

## **Experts at Kourou handle ATV with care**

In the past week at Kourou, experts from ESA and [Arianespace](#) carefully fitted ATV into a large protective container to transfer it to the giant vertical integration building.

The transfer took place on 20 January using a massive trailer at a maximum speed of just 15 km/hour.

ATV was removed from the container and, on 25 January, was lifted to the top of the Ariane 5 launcher that will carry it into space.

The vessel is now being integrated onto the launcher together with the adapter that serves as the interface with Ariane. In addition, the white insulating foil layer that thermally protects ATV from the enormous temperature changes in orbit is being attached.

"There is an incredible amount of hard work being done in these final weeks by teams from ESA, CNES, Arianespace and our partners. It's gratifying to see such dedication to making Johannes Kepler ready for flight," said Nico Dettmann, ESA's ATV Programme Manager.

## **Team work and training at ATV-CC**

At the ATV Control Centre (ATV-CC) in Toulouse, France, mission controllers from ESA and CNES, the French space agency, have been making final checks of the mission control infrastructure.

On 28 January, the mission control team conducted a simulation of the critical launch and early orbit phase. On 29 January, a test of the ground control system between ATV and the control centre will see controllers receiving live signals via cable from ATV mounted on top of Ariane.

Provided by European Space Agency

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