

## Astronauts relax, take in views after 2 spacewalks

March 3 2011, By MARCIA DUNN , AP Aerospace Writer

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In this frame grab made from NASA TV, space shuttle mission specialists Alvin Drew, left, and Stephen Bowen, make one final spacewalk of the mission and the final one involving Discovery at the International Space Station Tuesday, March 2, 2011. (AP Photo/NASA TV)

(AP) -- The 12 orbiting astronauts took care of a little maintenance work aboard the International Space Station on Thursday and gave it a boost before enjoying a well deserved break.

With the major objectives of their joint mission behind them, the station and shuttle crews couldn't wait to gather around the big bay window to take in the majestic views of Earth. Mission Control gave them the afternoon off, a day after the second and final [spacewalk](#) of Discovery's final journey.

Astronaut Alvin Drew, one of the spacewalkers, said when he first floated out earlier in the week, "I had to keep reminding myself that I had a job to do and not just take in this gorgeous scenery around me."

"You are part of the scene. You've gone through the looking glass," he said in a series of TV interviews.

Astronaut Nicole Stott said she and her crewmates have talked a lot about Discovery's final voyage. NASA's oldest shuttle will be retired once it returns to Earth next week and be sent to a museum.

Endeavour will make its farewell flight in April, and Atlantis will close out NASA's 30-year shuttle program this summer.

Stott noted that the word "bittersweet" is used quite a bit to describe this last flight of Discovery, which she called "a really, really high-performing spacecraft."

"I tend to think more 'bittersad,' " she told an interviewer.

She added: "It's just a part of history that I hope we hold on to and appreciate and that we celebrate when we get home and are walking away from her on the runway for the last time."

Shuttle commander Steven Lindsey said the mission has gone "just absolutely spectacular" and he and his crew couldn't be happier.

The six shuttle and six station [astronauts](#) teamed up to install a new storage room on the orbiting lab, and hooked up an equipment platform with a spare radiator.

On Thursday morning, they fired Discovery's thrusters to steer the outpost into a slightly higher orbit. And late afternoon, they were going

to get a special phone call - from President Barack Obama.

Discovery will remain at the space station until Sunday, a day longer than originally planned. The extra time will be used to unload supplies and experiments from the storage unit. They may get yet another bonus day in orbit, which would stretch their mission to 13 days. A decision was expected Thursday.

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