NASA partners with X-37B program for use of former space shuttle hangars

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In a testing procedure, the X-37B Orbital Test Vehicle taxis on the flightline in June 2009 at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. Credit: U.S. Air Force

NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida has entered into an agreement with the U.S. Air Force's X-37B Program for use of the center's Orbiter Processing Facility (OPF) Bays 1 and 2 to process the X-37B Orbital Test Vehicle for launch.

The OPF bays were last used during NASA's Space Shuttle Program. With the agency's transition to the Space Launch System rocket and Orion spacecraft, the agency currently does not have a mission requirement for the facilities. This agreement ensures the facilities will again be used for their originally-intended purpose—processing spacecraft.

"Kennedy is positioning itself for the future, transitioning to a multi-user launch facility for both commercial and government customers, while embarking on NASA's new deep space exploration plans," said Kennedy Center Director Robert Cabana. "A dynamic infrastructure is taking shape, designed to host many kinds of spacecraft and rockets."

In addition to vehicle preparation for launch, the X-37B Program conducted testing at Kennedy's Shuttle Landing Facility to demonstrate that landing the vehicle at the former shuttle runway is a technically feasible option.

The Boeing Company is performing construction upgrades in the OPFs on behalf of the X-37B Program. These upgrades are targeted to be complete in December.

Orbiter Processing Facility 1 and 2 (left) and Vehicle Assembly Building (right) at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Credit: NASA

Provided by NASA