

Europe space truck undocks from ISS

February 14 2015



This August 12, 2014 NASA image from video taken by High Definition Earth Viewing experiment aboard the ISS, mounted on the External Payload Facility of the European Space Agency's Columbus module, shows the International Space Station

Europe's last supply vessel to the International Space Station undocked on Saturday at the end of a six-month mission, the European Space Agency (ESA) said.

The automated spaceship, the Georges Lemaitre, separated from the ISS ahead of an operation on Sunday to burn it up in Earth's atmosphere, ESA said.

It is the last of five so-called Automated Transfer Vehicles (ATV) that ESA has contracted to provide for the US-led ISS project.

Each the size of a double-decker bus, the ships are designed to haul fuel, water, experiments and other essentials to the ISS crew.

After launch, they navigate their way by starlight and dock automatically—technologies that are to be used in future US space missions.

During their mission, the pressurised units are used for storage and for living space, and are filled with human waste and rubbish before they are destroyed by re-entry.

Sunday's suicide plunge is scheduled for 1812 GMT.

It had initially been set for February 27 to enable flight engineers to test a trajectory that could help planning for the ISS's own destruction in the future.

But that plan was scrapped when a fault developed in one of the ATV's four power sources.

The problem is minor but re-entry was brought forward as a precaution, said mission officials.

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