

NASA accepts delivery of European powerhouse for moonship

November 16 2018, by Marcia Dunn



European Space Agency director general, Jan Worner, far right, answers questions during a panel discussion with U.S. and European leaders, from left, Bill Hill, NASA deputy associate administrator for exploration systems, Philippe Berthe, ESA program manager, Mark Kirasich, NASA Orion program manager, and Sue Motil, Orion European Service Module integration manager at the Kennedy Space Center Friday, Nov. 16, 2018, in Cape Canaveral, Fla., to mark the arrival of a service module, that will propel NASA's Orion capsule to the moon. Behind them is a model of the Orion capsule and the service module. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

NASA has accepted delivery of a key European part needed to power the world's next-generation moonship.

U.S. and European leaders gathered at Kennedy Space Center on Friday to mark the occasion.

The newly arrived powerhouse, or service module, will propel NASA's Orion capsule to the moon during a test flight without passengers planned for 2020. A mega rocket under development by NASA, known as SLS for Space Launch System, will launch the combo.

The European component "allows us to take people farther into space than we've ever gone before, so it is a really big event for all of the Orion program," said NASA's Orion program manager Mark Kirasich.

Orion and the attached service module are meant to fly near the moon, but not land. Future missions will carry astronauts, with the goal of building an outpost just beyond the moon that could enable lunar landings and Mars expeditions.

The European Space Agency's director general, Jan Wörner, stressed to the crowd, "We will not go back to the moon, we will go forward to the moon." That's because it will be in "a totally different way" involving cooperation rather than competition, as was the case during NASA's Apollo moon-landing program of the 1960s and 1970s.

On its only spaceflight to date, the Orion capsule soared more than 3,600 miles (5,800 kilometers) above Earth in 2014. The second, considerably more distant demo will come in 2020 with the Orion and service module; that will mark the SLS' launch debut. This mission has been repeatedly delayed.



Mark Kerasich, speaks at a news conference as U.S. and European leaders gathered at the Kennedy Space Center Friday, Nov. 16, 2018, in Cape Canaveral, Fla., to mark the arrival of a service module, that will propel NASA's Orion capsule to the moon. (AP Photo/John Raoux)



Philippe Deloo, left, ESA European Service Module Project Manager for the Orion program speaks as Mark Kirasich, NASA Orion Program Manager listens at a panel discussion at the Kennedy Space Center Friday, Nov. 16, 2018, in Cape Canaveral, Fla., to mark the arrival of a service module, that will propel NASA's Orion capsule to the moon. (AP Photo/John Raoux)



The newly arrived powerhouse, or service module, that will propel NASA's Orion capsule to the moon during a passenger-less test flight planned for 2020 is seen behind a protective structure during a news conference with U.S. and European space leaders at the Kennedy Space Center Friday, Nov. 16, 2018, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP Photo/John Raoux)



Jan Worner, ESA director general speaks at a news conference at the Kennedy Space Center Friday, Nov. 16, 2018, in Cape Canaveral, Fla., to mark the arrival of a service module, that will propel NASA's Orion capsule to the moon. (AP Photo/John Raoux)



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