

Successful review for Jules Verne ATV launcher

7 March 2008



The Automated Transfer Vehicle (ATV) is the first fully automatic re-supply spacecraft of its kind. ESA's Jules Verne ATV is the first European space supplier for the ISS. Its launch is scheduled on 9 March from Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. Credits: ESA - D.Ducros

The Launch Readiness Review (RAL), organised by Arianespace at Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana, last night gave the go-ahead for today's transfer of Ariane 5 out to the launch pad.

About 80 people from Arianespace, Astrium, ESA and CNES participated in the 9-hour meeting in Kourou. Some 50 other experts joined by teleconference from Arianespace's Headquarters in Evry-Courcouronnes, near Paris, France.

"This RAL review is quite an exhaustive and transparent process where all the specialists and managers give an account of all their actions; it is very healthy and reassuring for ESA and especially the ATV team. We are very pleased with all the efforts and incredible work done by Arianespace and CNES in Kourou", said Daniel Sacotte, ESA

Director of Human Spaceflight, Microgravity and Exploration Programmes.

Roll-out of the 760-tonne launcher and Jules Verne ATV from the Final Assembly Building at Europe's Spaceport to the launch complex 3 (ELA 3) is scheduled for today (Friday 7 March) at 10:35 local time in Kourou (14:35 CET, 13:45 UT).

Two days ago, ESA conducted a final pre-launch assessment to certify that the Jules Verne spacecraft, integrated to the launcher, was ready to proceed into final countdown.

The launch of the 19-tonne Jules Verne ATV requires a special adaptation of Ariane 5 ES to launch the first ATV into low-Earth orbit. Ariane 5 ES qualification was completed at the end January 2008, including a re-ignition test of the upper EPS stage demonstrated in orbit in autumn 2007. This special qualification also required the strengthening of the upper stage to accommodate the 'heavy' ATV which is more than twice as heavy than any previous Ariane 5 payload.

Jules Verne ATV was put through a 7.5-month launch campaign at the Spaceport in Kourou, including 3.5 weeks of combined operations of Ariane 5 and ATV.

The Ariane 5 ES lift-off for this inaugural ATV flight is scheduled during the night of 8 to 9 March 2008 at 05:03 CET.

Source: ESA

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