

# NASA: 'There's your new spacecraft, America!'

December 5 2014, by Marcia Dunn

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This photo provided by NASA-TV, shows the view from the Orion spacecraft atop a United Launch Alliance Delta 4-Heavy rocket as it climbs to orbit during the first test flight Friday Dec. 5, 2014. (AP Photo/NASA-TV)

Indeed, the team working the Mars Curiosity rover tweeted a quick congrats: "We're one step closer to bootprints next to these rover tracks."

Lockheed Martin, which handled the \$370 million test flight for NASA

using a Delta IV rocket, already has begun work on a second Orion and plans to build a whole fleet. An asteroid redirected to lunar orbit is intended for the first stop in the 2020s, followed by Mars in the 2030s. Monthslong journeys would include habitats as well as the four-person capsules, which are bigger than the old-style Apollo and considerably enhanced.

"Everybody wants to go to Mars," astronaut Rex Walheim noted, "and it's important to go there to figure out what happened to Mars and establish our presence on another planet to become a multiplanetary species."

The atmosphere surrounding Friday's smooth sunrise launch—one day late because of wind and valve trouble—was a throwback to the shuttle-flying days, but considerably more upbeat than that last 2011 mission. Walheim was on board for that mission and welcomed all the excitement returning to Kennedy Space Center.



Mark Geyer, Orion Program manager, left, Mike Hawes, director of Human Space Flight Programs at Lockheed Martin, center, and Dan Collins, the chief operating officer for United Launch Alliance, answer questions during a news conference after wind gusts and sticky fuel valves conspired to keep NASA's new Orion spacecraft on the launch pad, delaying a crucial test flight meant to revitalize human exploration at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Thursday, Dec. 4, 2014, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

"Here we are again now, the United States leading exploration out into the solar system," Geyer told reporters.

Before the news conference ended, a rainbow appeared in the sky.

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