

ESA says Columbus laboratory is completed

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The European Space Agency's Columbus laboratory -- called Europe's cornerstone contribution to the International Space Station -- has been completed.

Final integration has been successfully completed in Bremen, Germany. Columbus will be shipped to Cape Canaveral at the end of May, from where it will be launched on a space shuttle to the ISS during the second half of 2007, the Paris-based ESA said.

During its planned 10-year operational lifetime, European scientific researchers will use Columbus to conduct a vast program of experiments in the areas of life and physical sciences, materials science, fundamental physics and technology research, the ESA said.

A May 2 ceremony will be held in Bremen to celebrate the completion of the laboratory. German Chancellor Angela Merkel will speak during that event.

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