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Ashley Edwards/Grey Hautaluoma
Headquarters, Washington
202-358-1756/0668
ashley.edwards-1@nasa.gov, grey.hautaluoma-1@nasa.gov

Brandi Dean
Johnson Space Center, Houston
281-244-1403
brandi.k.dean@nasa.gov

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NASA Invites Reporters to Observe Robotics Tests in Arizona Desert

WASHINGTON -- NASA will hold the annual Desert "RATS," or Research and Technology Studies, field test in the Arizona desert this fall, hosting a media day for journalists on Sept. 15.

Desert RATS will help determine what technologies and capabilities will be needed when NASA takes future trips beyond Earth. The tests will include a simulated 14-day mission during which two crew members -- an astronaut and a geologist -- will live inside NASA's prototype Lunar Electric Rover. They will scout the test area for features of geological interest and conduct simulated moonwalks to collect samples.

NASA's heavy-lift rover Tri-ATHLETE, or All-Terrain Hex-Legged Extra-Terrestrial Explorer, will carry a habitat mockup to which the lunar rover will dock. The media day will include lunar rover and Tri-ATHLETE demonstrations and opportunities to interview the engineers, scientists and astronauts involved in the tests.

Interested reporters should contact Brandi Dean at 281-244-1403 by Friday, Sept. 11, for the media day agenda and registration information. Access to the test site is