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NASA Gives Go for Space Shuttle Atlantis Launch on Nov. 16

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. -- NASA's space shuttle Atlantis is targeted to begin an 11-day flight to the International Space Station with a Nov. 16 launch from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Liftoff is scheduled for 2:28 p.m. EST.

Atlantis' launch date was announced Thursday at the conclusion of a flight readiness review at Kennedy. During the meeting, senior NASA and contractor managers assessed the risks associated with the mission and determined the shuttle's equipment, support systems and procedures are ready.

The Nov. 16 target date depends on the planned Nov. 14 launch of an Atlas V rocket from nearby Cape Canaveral Air

Force Station. The Atlas has reserved the Eastern Range on Nov. 14 and 15. If the Atlas launch is delayed to Nov. 15, the shuttle's liftoff will move to no earlier than 2:02 p.m. on Nov. 17.

The STS-129 mission will focus on storing spare hardware on the exterior of the space station. The flight will include three spacewalks and install two platforms on the station's truss, or backbone. The platforms will hold spare parts to sustain station operations after the shuttle fleet is retired.

Commander Charlie Hobaugh and his crew of five astronauts are scheduled to arrive at Kennedy at approximately 5 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 12, for final launch preparations. Joining Hobaugh on STS-129 will be Pilot Barry Wilmore and Mission Specialists Leland Melvin, Randy Bresnik, Mike Foreman and Bobby Satcher. Nicole Stott, an astronaut who currently resides on the station, will return home with the Atlantis crew after living in space for more than two months. Her return on the shuttle is slated to be the final time it is used to rotate space station crew members.

STS-129 will be Atlantis' 31st mission and the 31st shuttle flight dedicated to station assembly and maintenance. For more information about STS-129, visit:

<http://www.nasa.gov/shuttle>

Mission Specialist Bobby Satcher, an orthopedic surgeon, now is sending updates about his training to his Twitter account, Astro_Bones. He can be followed at:

http://www.twitter.com/Astro_Bones

For more information about the space station, visit:

<http://www.nasa.gov/station>

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