

Endeavour Moves To Pad For Launch Preparations

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By Irene Klotz



KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, Fla. — Fresh on the heels of shuttle Discovery's return from its final spaceflight, shuttle Endeavour reached the launch pad on March 11 for preparations to deliver the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer to the International Space Station during the STS-134 mission.

The launch, scheduled for 7:48 p.m. EDT on April 19, will be the 25th and last flight of OV-105, the replacement orbiter for Challenger that first flew in 1992.

Bathed in xenon lights and before an audience of thousands of Kennedy Space Center workers and their families and friends, Endeavour was rolled out of the Vehicle Assembly Building just before 8 p.m. on March 10.

The move, delayed one day due to poor weather, had been planned for the same day Discovery returned from the STS-133 mission, which completed construction of the U.S. portion of the space station. The orbiter reached Pad 39A at 3:49 a.m.

"Our team is really proud to be a part of just this one small part of the space shuttle legacy," said Dana Hutcherson, Endeavour flow director, as the shuttle's crawler-transporter began the 3.5-mi. trek to the launch pad.

The Endeavour crew is led by Mark Kelly, husband of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.), who was critically injured during a Jan. 8 shooting in Tucson that left six dead. Giffords's office said the congresswoman plans to attend the launch, pending approval from her doctors.

The STS-134 crew also includes pilot Gregory Johnson and mission specialists Greg Chamitoff, Andrew Feustel and Michael Fincke, as well as Roberto Vittori of the European Space Agency. They are scheduled to spend 14 days in orbit and conduct four spacewalks to help prepare the space station for operations after the shuttle's retirement.

Endeavour photo: NASA