



PRESS INFORMATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STS-131 Launches on Mission to International Space Station

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, FL (April 5) –Space Shuttle Discovery launched this morning on a 13-day mission to deliver nearly 8 tons of cargo and science equipment to the International Space Station (ISS).

STS-131 is carrying the Leonardo Multi-Purpose Logistics Module which serves as a moving van and enables the delivery of equipment to the Station and the return of science experiments to Earth. While docked to the Station, Discovery's crew will conduct three spacewalks and spend about 100 hours moving cargo including a new Minus Eighty-Degree Laboratory Freezer for storing samples aboard the ISS and the Muscle Atrophy Resistive Exercise System that will be used to better understand the effects of microgravity on the muscular system.

“The Space Shuttle team is operating at peak proficiency and the hardware is in excellent shape,” said Dan Brandenstein USA Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. “This mission is helping to secure the future of human space flight and position the International Space Station for long-term contributions to exploration.”

United Space Alliance, NASA's prime human spaceflight contractor, processes and prepares each Space Shuttle for launch. On average, a Shuttle processing flow requires 750,000 man hours and involves thousands of tasks aimed at preparing the orbiter, the two solid booster rockets and the external fuel tank for launch. USA also provides planning, training, and on-orbit support for the Shuttle and ISS crew missions.

Along with payload and maintenance tasks, STS-131 crewmembers will participate in science investigations focused on vaccine development, sleep studies, atmospheric research, and plume studies to improve the safe arrival and departure of current and future spacecraft.

Space Shuttle Discovery also will return to Earth with scientific samples from current Station science studies including experiments studying bone loss, heart disease, nutrition, and metallurgical solidification.

“Human space flight is alive and well aboard the ISS,” said Brandenstein, adding, “and this mission’s payload delivery will allow for the continued expansion of the science and exploration in this one-of-a-kind laboratory.”

About United Space Alliance:

United Space Alliance is a world leader in space operations with extensive experience in all aspects of the field. Headquartered in Houston, USA has more than 8,500 employees working in Texas, Florida and Alabama. Currently, USA is applying its broad range of capabilities to NASA’s Space Shuttle, International Space Station and Constellation programs as well as to space operations customers in the commercial and international space industry sectors.

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