



PRESS INFORMATION

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**As Atlantis Launches on Final Mission, Dedicated Workforce
Ensuring Shuttle Flying Better Than Ever**

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, Fla. (May 14, 2010) – As Space Shuttle Atlantis was successfully launched today on its final planned mission to the International Space Station, United Space Alliance officials noted that the vehicle and the team that prepares and executes the missions are performing better than ever.

“It is a testament to the Shuttle team’s professionalism and dedication,” said Howard DeCastro, Space Shuttle Program Manager for United Space Alliance. “It goes back to attention to detail by a workforce that cares so much about flying safely.”

Atlantis, which rolled into its processing facility on November 27 of last year after completing STS-129, spent 137 days there undergoing processing for its final mission. “The processing flow went very smoothly,” said, Mark Nappi, USA Vice President of Launch and Recovery Systems, “and the launch pad flow was also great. This team is operating better than ever, and we’re looking forward to another successful mission.”

The liftoff of STS-132 occurred as the Shuttle Program is experiencing a five-year trend of declining pre-flight and mission anomalies. From the STS-114 flight of Discovery in 2005 to STS-131 in April, Interim Problem Reports, which refer to flight hardware issues, have been reduced by 90.3 percent. In-Flight Anomalies, or problems that come up during the flight, are down approximately 91 percent during the same period.

“By practicing preventive maintenance we usually identify problems before they develop,” said Nappi. “It’s the experience of the workforce paying off.”

DeCastro noted the entire Shuttle team has contributed to this success.

“I want to give high praise to the NASA leadership for providing an open environment with broad and open communications in the Shuttle program,” he said. “We continue to work closely with NASA’s leadership and the other contractors at solving problems when they do occur.”

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Much has been learned over 29 years with the program benefitting from advances in analysis and testing. This has also provided a significant knowledge base making the Shuttle safer, according to Nappi.

Even though the vehicles are now performing better than ever, every issue is taken seriously. The Shuttle team applies knowledge gained from both successes and problems from one flight to planning for the next.

Nappi points out that when anomalies happen, USA's experts are not satisfied to just fix the problem. They dig deeper to see how it applies to collective lessons learned on similar hardware on other vehicles, and to see how this data can be applied to future human spaceflight endeavors.

"They look at how one seemingly unrelated problem compares to another," he said.

"Of course, safety is our number one goal, for the crews, our people and the vehicle," said Scott Hartwig, USA Associate Program Manager for Flight Operations. "Resolving issues increases the robustness of the entire system, and contributes to the design of future missions to help make those even more safe."

"The passion of our workforce is like no other," said Nappi. "They believe strongly in what they are doing. They treat the hardware like it is their own. And that commitment will be there for each remaining flight."

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 8,000 employees working in Texas, Florida and Alabama. Currently, USA is applying its broad range of capabilities to NASA's Space Shuttle and International Space Station programs as well as to space operations customers in the commercial and international space industry sectors.