

# Giffords' Husband, Mark Kelly, Returns to Shuttle Mission

YAHOO! CONTRIBUTOR NETWORK

Mark Whittington Fri Feb 4, 2:13 pm ET

Mark Kelly, the astronaut husband of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, [has decided that he will command the STS-134 space shuttle mission](#) after all. Kelly has been at his wife's side almost 24/7 since she was shot in Tucson.

STS-134, slated to be the last flight of the space shuttle Endeavour, is scheduled to lift off on April 19 and deliver the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer to the International Space Station. Kelly will resume training with the rest of his crew after a leave of absence for a mission that he has already spent eighteen months preparing for.

Giffords is reported to be making remarkable progress at the Memorial Herman TIRR rehab facility in Houston. Her husband will be training about a half hours drive away at the Johnson Space Flight Center, so it is possible that he will be able to stop by for a visit from time to time.

The decision was taken, without a doubt, after long discussions between husband and wife and consultation with her doctors. One can surmise that Mark Kelly's constant presence is not longer vital for Gabrielle's Giffords' recovery and that she will take inspiration knowing that he husband is doing the thing he loves best in the world, after her of course.

Kelly was the featured speaker at the National Prayer Breakfast recently. He spoke about how his wife's wounding at deepened his religious faith, something that had not been as important to him as it is now.

The rest of the crew of STS-134 are Pilot Gregory H. Johnson, and Mission Specialists Michael Fincke, Greg Chamitoff, Andrew Feustel and European Space Agency astronaut Roberto Vittori.

Besides the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer the space shuttle Endeavour will convey spare parts, including two S-band communications antennas, a high-pressure gas tank, additional spare parts for Dextre and micrometeoroid debris shields to the International Space Station.

The mission of STS-134, taking place as it does just over thirty years from the very first space shuttle mission, is a bitter sweet event. The space shuttle program is slated to end this year and American astronauts will hence forth have to ride as passengers on Russian Soyuz space craft for the foreseeable future. Commercial space craft, largely financed by NASA, are under development. There are vague plans, in the wake of the cancellation of the Constellation program, for exploration beyond low Earth orbit. But after 2011, Americans will not fly to the high frontier of space in their own space craft for a long time to come.

