

## Final Payload Installed In Shuttle Endeavour



NASA and contractor engineers and technicians are busy installing a sophisticated cosmic ray detector into Endeavour's cargo bay today as the agency continues to prep the orbiter for its 25th and final flight.

Six astronauts are scheduled to launch aboard Endeavour at 7:48 p.m. April 19, hauling the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer to the International Space Station. Technicians today are transferring the 7.5-ton particle physics experiment package from the payload changeout room at Kennedy Space Center's launch pad 39A.

A series of interface verification tests then will be performed to make certain all mechanical and electrical connections have been hooked up properly.

The high-energy particle detector will search for the dark matter -- which is invisible to the human eye -- that theoretically makes up 85 to 90 percent of the universe. The \$2 billion experimental package could yield findings that shed new light on the origin and evolution of the universe.

Engineers are conducting a helium signature leak check of the shuttle's three liquid-fueled main engines and aft engine compartment close-outs will begin early next week.

Also in work: routine prelaunch testing of the orbiter's Auxiliary Power Units.

Launch preparations are moving along without significant problems. There are about six contingency days in the current schedule that could be used to catch up on work or deal with any problems that crop up.

A launch on April 19 would lead to a scheduled May 3 landing at KSC.

**ABOUT THE IMAGE:** Click to enlarge the NASA image of the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer being delivered to launch pad 39A in a canister sized and shaped like the shuttle's cargo bay. You can also click on the enlarged image to get an even bigger, more detailed view. Photo credit: NASA/Cory Huston.

Posted by Todd Halvorson at 11:39 AM 0 Comments