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German ESA astronaut Thomas Reiter scheduled for launch on 1 July 2006

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STS-121 mission crew ready for the practice countdown at Launch Pad 39B

ESA astronaut Thomas Reiter, from Germany, will be launched onboard the US Space Shuttle "Discovery" on 1 July 2006, according to a NASA statement. Reiter will stay between six and seven months on the International Space Station (ISS).

"I am very pleased that Thomas Reiter's mission to the ISS is now scheduled - it will be the first European long-term mission there. This mission has great significance for the future of manned European space travel and for the scientific discoveries that such missions will bring. The Columbus Mission Control Centre in DLR's Oberpfaffenhofen facility will be of special importance as it will supervise the mission throughout its long duration", said Professor Dr Sigmar Wittig, chairman of the board of the German Aerospace Center (DLR).

Space Shuttle "Discovery" is planned to launch on 1 July 2006 at 21:48 Central European Summer Time (19:48 GMT) from the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida, USA. The docking manoeuvre to the ISS is planned for the third day of the mission.

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