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Space Shuttle Discovery returns to Earth

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Thomas Reiter returns to Earth after his long mission

The German ESA astronaut Thomas Reiter completed a successful mission and an extended stay in space when Discovery (STS-116) completed a successful landing. Prof. Sigmar Wittig, Chairman of the Board of Management of the German Aerospace Center (DLR) greeted Thomas Reiter himself after landing and congratulated Michael Griffin, Head of the American space agency NASA, on the successful landing of the Discovery.



"First and foremost, I am glad that, after his 169-day voyage, Thomas Reiter and the entire crew of the Discovery have landed safe and sound. Once again, Europe has proved its expertise as a partner within the ISS programme", said Prof. Wittig.

"In particular, the Columbus Control Center within DLR's facility in Oberpfaffenhofen has had the opportunity to prove its performance over the last six months and at the same time gain valuable experience ahead of taking control of the European Columbus laboratory", Wittig continued.

Thomas Reiter performed 33 experiments on behalf of European institutions during the Astrolab mission and undertook an EVA (extra-vehicular activity). Through his work, he has built up worldwide recognition amongst all his colleagues and the scientists involved in the mission.

The STS-116 mission, Discovery's 33rd voyage and a space shuttle's 20th assembly mission to the ISS came to an end after 13 days. Along with the changeover of a member of the permanent crew, an additional structural component (P5) was installed during the mission and the existing temporary ISS electrical and cooling systems were reconfigured.

During the STS-116 mission, four spacewalks were undertaken. After undocking from the ISS, the Discovery crew also launched three micro-satellites into orbit around the Earth. The satellites form part of the Atmospheric Neutral Density Experiments (ANDE) and their mission is to measure the density and composition of the atmosphere in low earth orbit.

Contact

Andreas Schütz

German Aerospace Center (DLR), Corporate Communications, Spokesman

Tel: +49 2203 601-2474
Mobile: +49 171 3126466
Fax: +49 2203 601-3249
E-Mail: andreas.schuetz@dlr.de

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