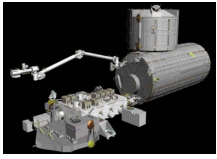


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By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



A picture of the Japanese Kibo module, of which Endeavor needs to deliver the last two pieces
NASA

[Weather May Prevent Endeavor from Launching](#)

The forecast doesn't look good

According to weather predictions released by the American space agency's weather office, the space shuttle Endeavor has a 40-percent chance of launching tomorrow, July 11th. The problem is mostly owed to the fact that clouds and incoming storms over the Kennedy Space Center (KSC), in Cape Canaveral, Florida, are coming together and are giving birth to a larger storm. Under these conditions, NASA says it's absolutely impossible for the shuttle to fly, as the risks associated with such an attempt are too great. After working a full week on repairing the craft's damage hydrogen vent lines, engineers now find themselves unable to change anything in the schedule.

This is very bad news for NASA, but necessary for the members of the International Space Station (ISS) Expedition 20 crew. The astronauts in orbit have enough supplies to endure for a while, as a Russian capsule has recently made a run and delivered food, oxygen, water and science equipments. However, for the American agency, further delays could lead to the reorganization of the entire launch manifest for 2009. With another few shuttle mission scheduled by 2010, any more delays in Endeavor's launch and some other take-offs would have to be moved in 2010, which would in turn affect the program for that year as well.

And seeing how, come 2011, the shuttle program will be shut down, the ISS runs the risk of remaining without some of its scheduled components, despite the fact that they are constructed and ready to be delivered. Delays are also due to the fact that the Launch Pad 39B at the KSC, originally part of the shuttle program, was handed over to Project Constellation after shuttle Atlantis' STS-125 mission. This means that only Launch Pad 39A is available for this type of launches, and it takes a couple of months to have it ready from one launch to the other.

Todd McNamara, the shuttle's weather officer, said that, "On launch day we are expecting thunderstorms to affect the countdown, especially in the afternoon." In a news briefing on Thursday, NASA Test Director Steve Payne added that, "That is always the remaining issue that we have. If there's a hole in the clouds, we'll go for it. If not, then we'll go for it the next day. But we would rather get it done on Saturday." Scott Higginbotham, NASA's payload manager, concluded that, "Good things come to those who wait. It's time to go fly and complete Kibo," [Space](#) informs.