



KSC Countdown

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Michoud facility team at KSC to work on external tank

Arrival of Mars orbiter at the red planet airs on NASA TV Friday

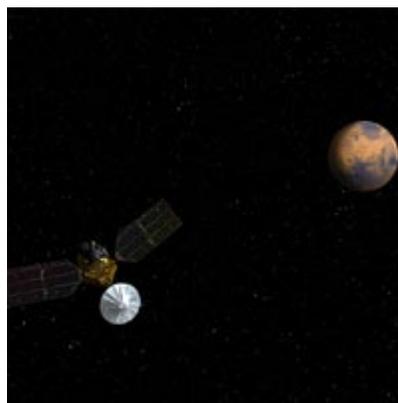


◆ **Shuttle Update:** On the newly arrived ET-119, aft hard point closeout was primed March 4 with foaming to

follow. The aft hard point closeout foam trimming was completed Tuesday. Intertank machining is continuing. The flight-side seal replacement on the ground umbilical carrier panel and the pneumatic preps for checkout were completed March 4. A team from the Michoud Assembly Facility is at KSC. Scaffolding for the team's activities is complete and the team started work on the external tank March 5.

◆ **MRO Update:** NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter begins the most critical minutes of its flight on Friday. Live arrival and orbit insertion commentary airs on NASA TV and the Web beginning at 3:30 p.m.. The orbiter's main engines begin firing shortly after 4:24 p.m. to slow it enough for Martian gravity to grab it into orbit. Commentary ends at approximately 5:45 p.m. EST.

The orbiter carries six instruments for studying every level of Mars from underground layers to the top of the atmosphere. Among them, the most powerful telescopic camera ever sent to a foreign planet will reveal rocks the size of a small desk. An advanced



mineral-mapper will be able to identify water-related deposits in areas as small as a baseball infield. Radar will probe for buried ice and water. A weather camera will monitor the entire planet daily. An infrared sounder will monitor atmospheric temperatures and the movement of water vapor. Scientists will analyze the information to gain a better understanding of changes in Mars' atmosphere and the processes that have formed and modified the planet's surface.

■ **NASA Science** — Something's happening on the sun: all the sunspots have vanished. Sunspots come and go with an 11-year rhythm called the sunspot cycle. At the cycle's peak, solar maximum, the sun is continually peppered with spots, some as big as the planet Jupiter. But for every peak there is a valley, and during solar minimum, months can go by without a single sunspot. Solar

physicists say that with the recent absence of sunspots, solar minimum has arrived. You can read all about it at the Web site

http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2006/06mar_solarminimum.htm?list29875.

■ **Road Alert** — A mobile launcher platform is being moved from Pad B to the Vehicle Assembly Building March 16 and 17. Security asks employees not to park on nor drive over the crawlerway until the move is complete.

■ **Education Opportunity** — The University of Miami is accepting applications for the Master of Science in Industrial Engineering program starting in May and the Master of Science in Management of Technology program starting in June.

Both programs will be taught in Cape Canaveral. Courses are held Friday evenings and Saturdays to accommodate working professionals. For more information and to receive an application/brochure, please call Augusto Roca, program administrator, at 305-284-4100, or send an e-mail to augusto@miami.edu.

■ **Reminder** — A presentation on heart disease is being held at 2:30 p.m. today in the O&C, room 3132.

■ **Did You Know?** On March 9 in 1959, the first Barbie dolls went on sale.

KSC Countdown is published every Tuesday & Thursday. Deadlines are 10 a.m. Mondays & Wednesdays.

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