

# ATLANTIS: The Final Mission



# Atlantis: The Final Mission

- **CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) --** Atlantis and four astronauts thundered into orbit, July 8, 2011 on NASA's last space shuttle voyage, writing the final chapter in a 30-year story of dazzling triumphs, shattering tragedy and, ultimately, unfulfilled expectations. After days of gloomy forecasts full of rain and heavy cloud cover, the spaceship lifted off at 11:29 a.m. -- just 2 minutes late -- and embarked on the 135th shuttle mission. The crowd of spectators was estimated at nearly 1 million.
- **When Atlantis touched down July 21, 2011 at Cape Canaveral, Fla.,** the high-flying era of the space shuttles came down to earth as well. After 30 years, the shuttle program, which began on April 12, 1981 with Colombia, has ended with the 135th mission. Atlantis delivered the Raffaello multi-purpose logistics module packed with supplies and spare parts to the International Space Station, and retrieved a failed pump unit and other items for the return trip. Atlantis went aloft 33 times, logging over 125 million miles. The last shuttle will become a museum exhibit at the Kennedy Space Center.

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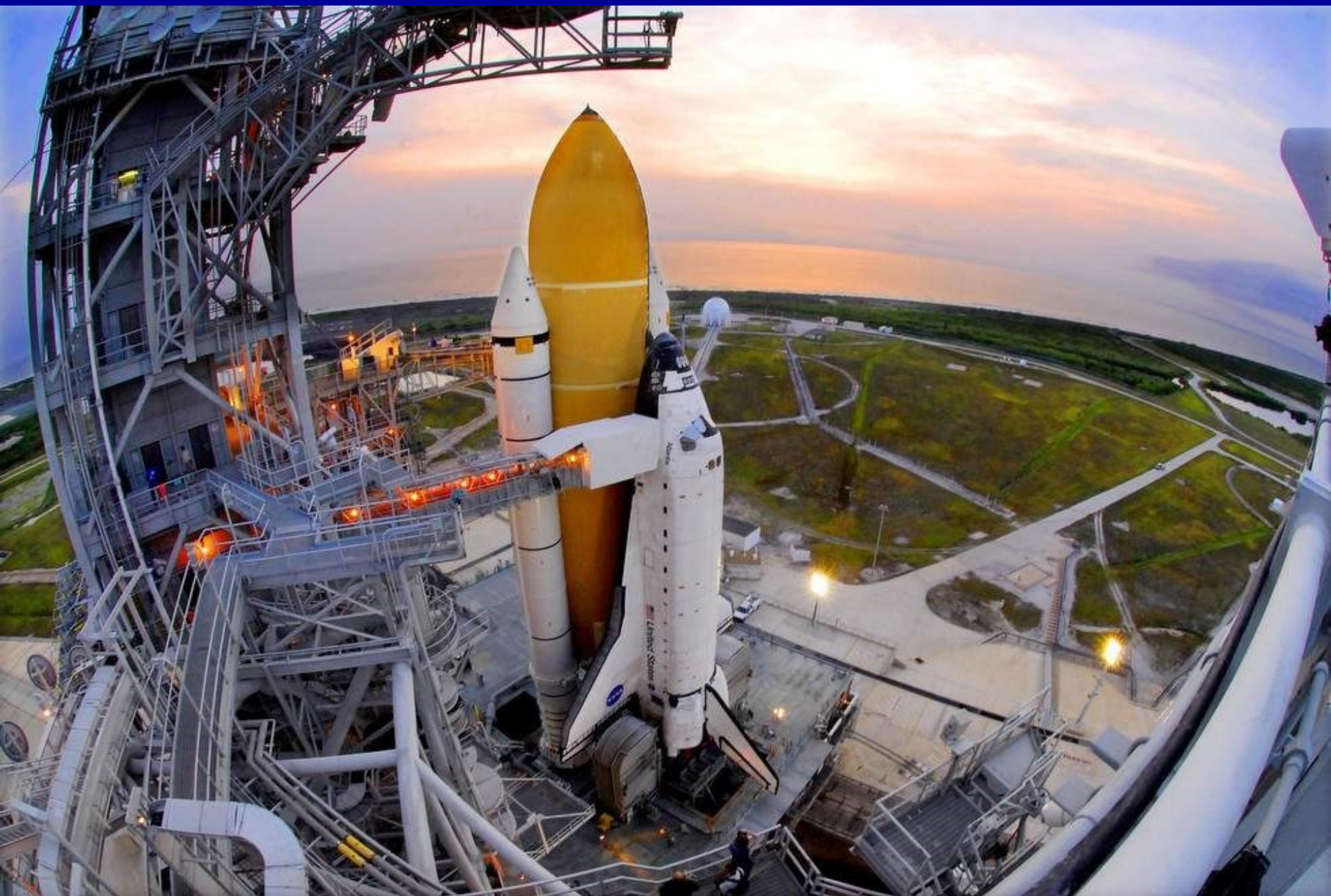
July 8, 2011



The space shuttle Atlantis astronauts left to right, mission specialists Rex Walheim, Sandra Magnus, pilot Doug Hurley and commander Chris Ferguson.

July 8, 2011



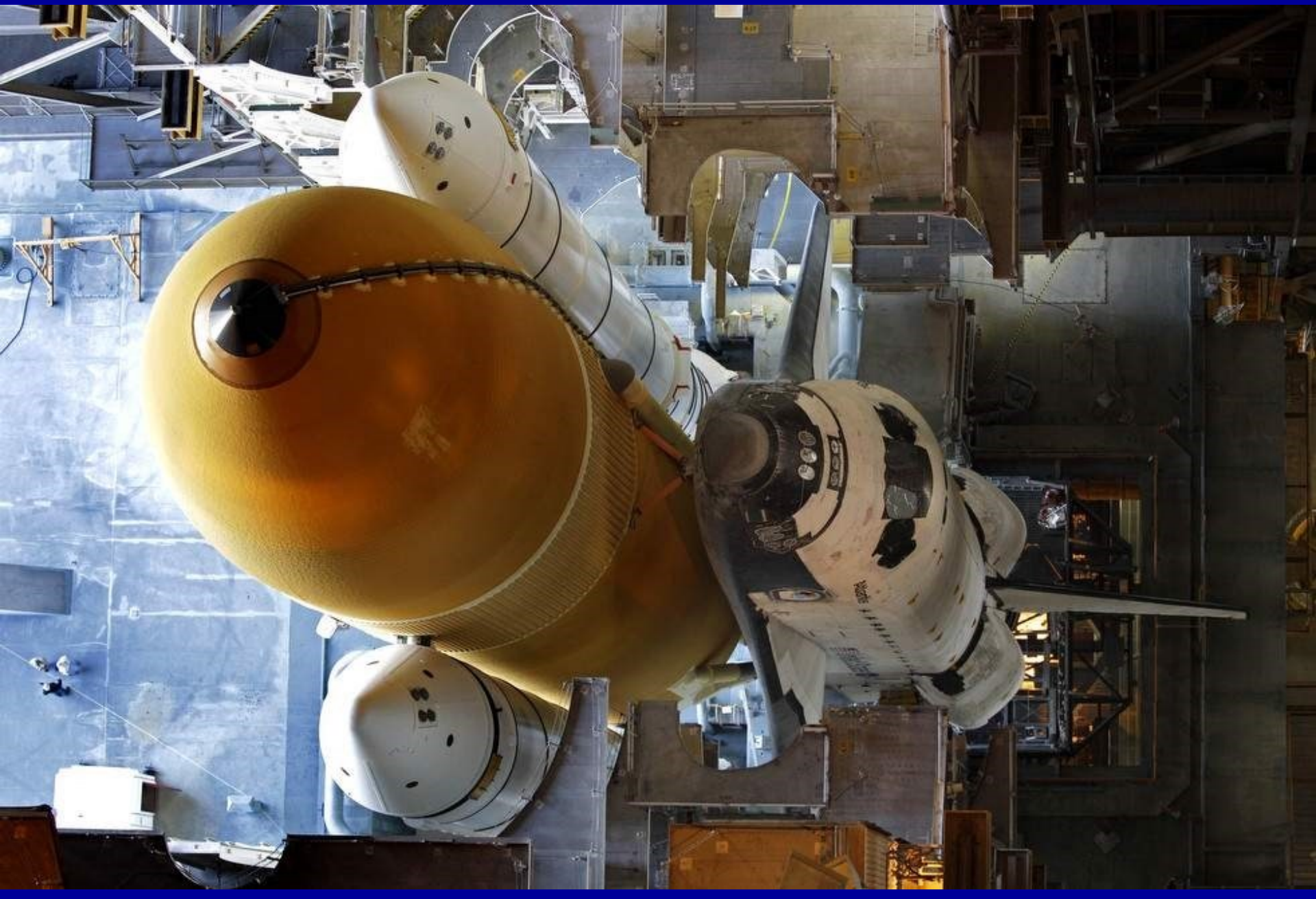






July 8, 2011

A photograph taken at night showing the Space Shuttle Columbia being mated to the Mobile Launcher Platform (MLP) by the Shuttle Carrier Mechanism (SCM). The shuttle is white with orange external tank and white solid rocket boosters. The MLP is a large, white, rectangular structure. The SCM is a complex, multi-level structure with many lights. The shuttle is being lowered into the MLP. The scene is reflected in a large pool of water in the foreground. A water tower is visible in the background on the right.







July 8, 2011



Space shuttle Atlantis lifts off from Pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. The STS135 mission, the final shuttle flight, will bring supplies to the international space station.

July 8, 2011



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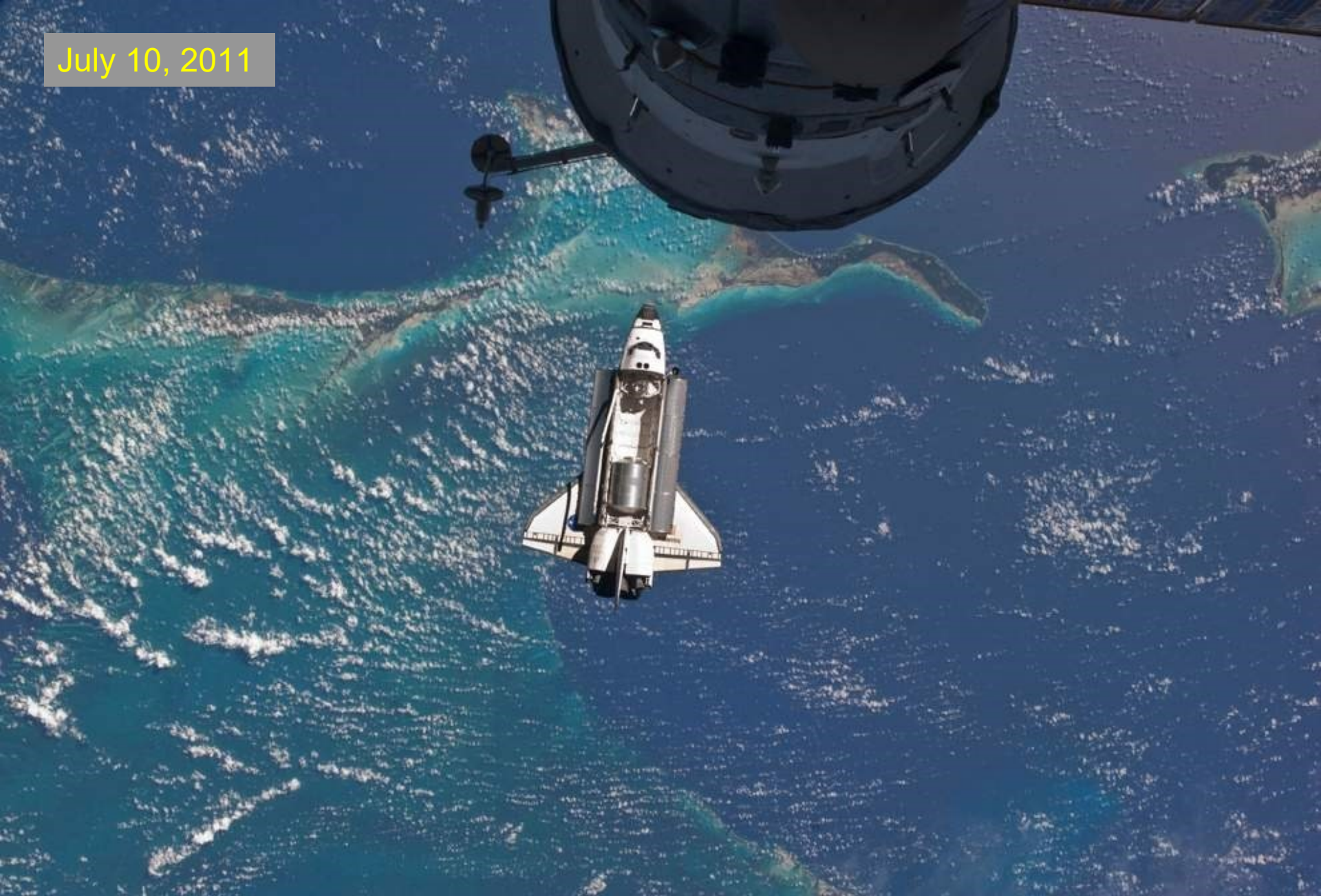
NASA managers watch from Firing Room Four of the Launch Control Center as the space shuttle Atlantis lifts off from Launch Pad 39A.

July 8, 2011

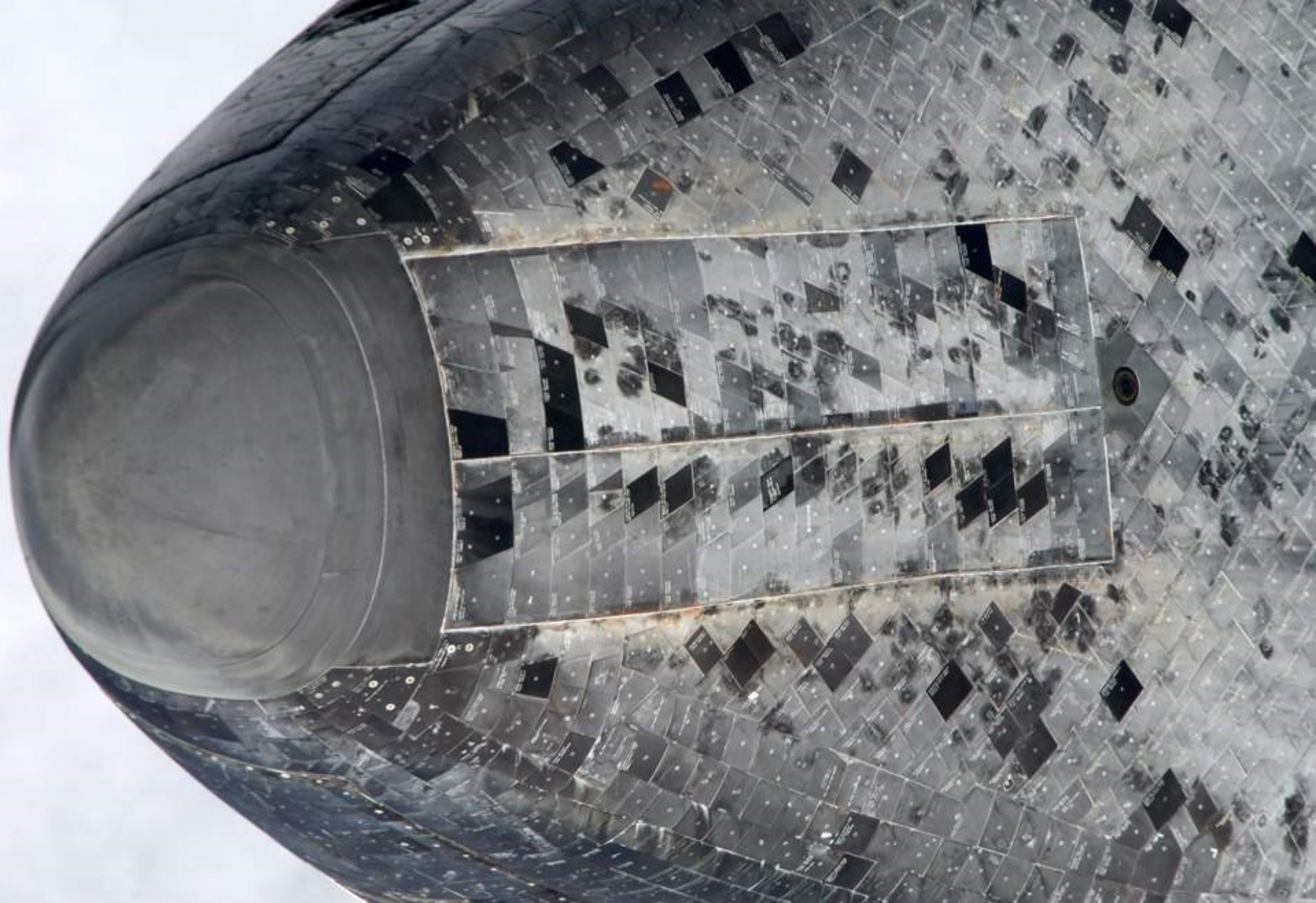


The external fuel tank floats away from Atlantis after a successful launch on July 8, 2011 in space.

July 10, 2011



The space shuttle Atlantis flies over the Bahamas prior to a perfect docking with the International Space Station.



The nose of Atlantis in Earth orbit.



Atlantis Commander Chris Ferguson (left) and Pilot Doug Hurley.



Astronaut Rex Walheim works on the mid-deck of Atlantis.



Astronaut Ron Garan checks out his pistol grip tool in the International Space Station's Quest airlock prior to his July 12 spacewalk on July 12, 2011.

July 12, 2011



The International Space Station and Atlantis (right) orbit Earth.

July 12, 2011



Spacewalker Ron Garan rides on the International Space Station's robotic arm with Earth below as he transfers a failed pump module to the cargo bay of space shuttle Atlantis during the final spacewalk.



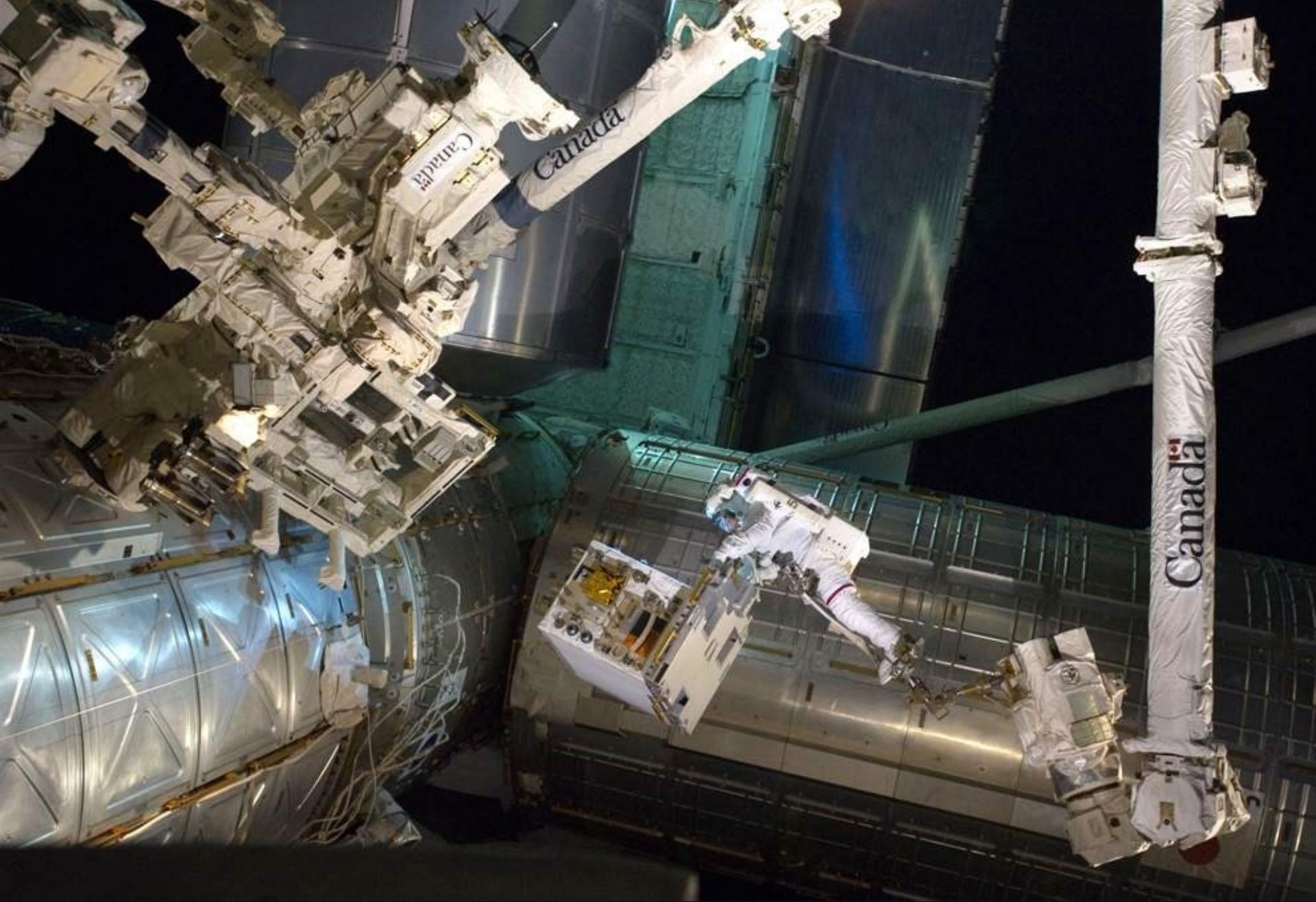
Atlantis and International Space Station astronauts gather for one of the final meals shared between shuttle and station crews aboard the orbiting laboratory on July 14, 2011.



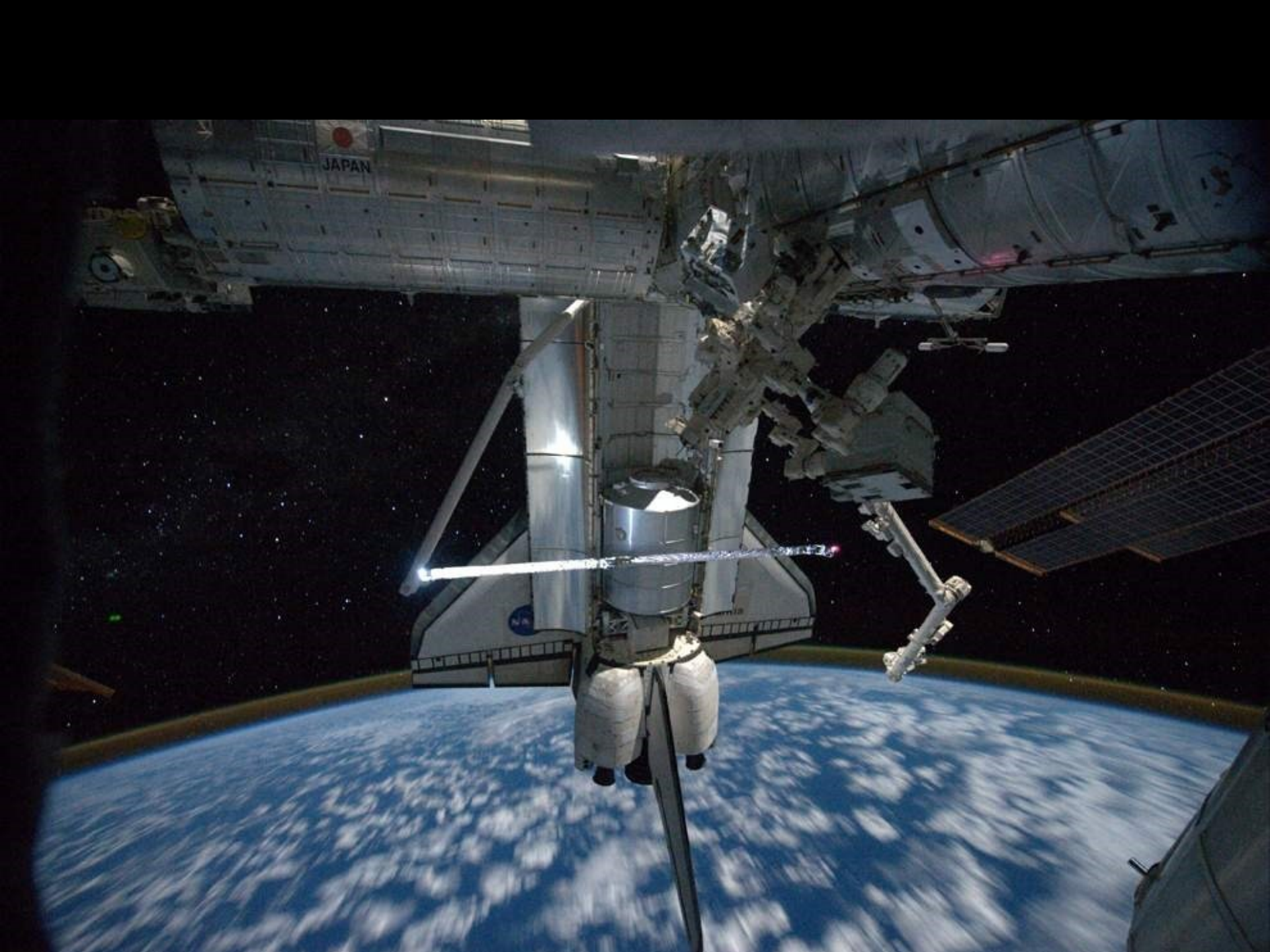
Astronaut Sandy Magnus gets one last visit to the Cupola on board the International Space Station before the two spacecraft undocked on July 18, 2011.



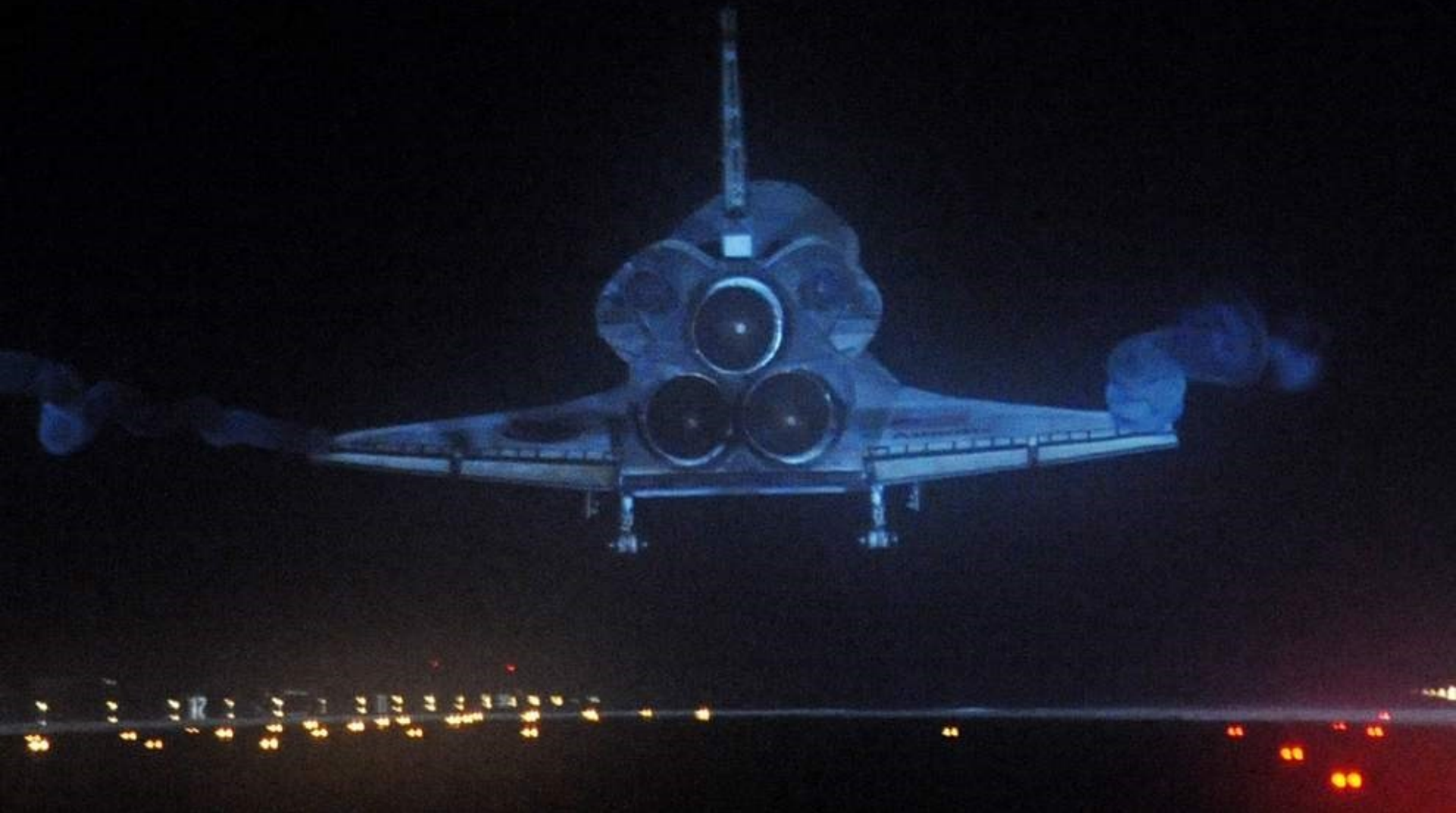
Astronaut Ronald Garan leaves the Quest airlock on the International Space Station.



Astronaut Mike Fossum carries a Robotics Refueling Mission payload from Atlantis' cargo bay to a platform used by the space station's famous robot DEXTRE.



July 21, 2011



Atlantis lands on July 21, 2011 at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, ending its 13-day mission.



July 21, 2011



The drag chute is deployed as the space shuttle Atlantis lands at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, completing STS-135, the final mission of the NASA shuttle program.









July 21, 2011



Space shuttle Atlantis is towed to the Orbiter Processing facility for decommissioning at the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, Fla.







July 21, 2011



Commander Chris Ferguson walks under Atlantis after landing at the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, Fla.

July 21, 2011



Atlantis is towed into its hangar at the Orbiter Processing Facility at Kennedy Space Center in Florida after it landed several hours earlier, ending its 13-day mission and final flight for the space shuttle program.

# Spectators







**THE END**

