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THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

The International Space Station (ISS) will provide a permanent orbiting workplace for men and women from many different nationalities. When completed in 2004 the huge complex will be the largest ever structure in space, stretching over 350 feet and sprawling across an area the size of a modern football stadium. For scientists and engineers it will be a multipurpose laboratory where weightlessness will allow medical research and the development of new materials and manufacturing processes. It will provide an unprecedented gateway to discovery – for scientific, technological, and commercial purposes – where space technology can be tested in a working environment. The ISS will consist of six laboratory modules and its construction in orbit over a five-year period will require some 43 flights by the U.S. Space Shuttle and Russian Proton and Soyuz rockets. A robotic arm will be used when linking the modules together. Sixteen nations – the U.S., Canada, Japan, Russia, Brazil, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom – have banded together in one of the largest non-military joint efforts in history. The program involves more than 100,000 people in space agencies and at hundreds of contractor and support companies around the world.

THE ISS PROGRAM INSIGNIA – There is a certain amount of symbolism used in the ISS program patch which is shaped like a crucible. The crucible shape represents the container which the ISS will fill with the knowledge gained within its laboratories. The color blue predominates and represents the Blue Planet Earth about which the ISS will orbit at 51.6 degrees of inclination. The 470-ton Station is displayed at Assembly Complete in an orbit of 220 miles about the Earth. The stars and planets in the background are those in deep space that represent goals yet to be achieved. A chain surrounding the space station above Earth represents the thousands of people from all over the world who have come together to build the first-ever truly international science platform in space. The five-pointed stars, facing both east and west, represent the five space agencies of the countries involved. At the bottom of the patch is a green laurel that illustrates the peaceful cooperation of all the nations coming together.