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SPACE SHUTTLE (STS-70 / DISCOVERY)

Assuring the continued full capability of NASA's orbiting communications network is the primary purpose of Space Shuttle Mission STS-70. The Tracking and Data Relay Satellite (TDRS-G) to be deployed during the mission will become an on-orbit spare in the advanced TDRS System (TDRSS).

In addition to TDRS-G, the Shuttle Discovery also will carry into orbit a crew of five and a number of smaller payloads. Liftoff will occur from Launch Pad 39B into a 184-statute mile (296-kilometer) orbit. Mission duration currently is set for eight days, but may change to five due to scheduling requirements. If Discovery lifts off when planned, it will become the 100th U.S. manned spaceflight since 1961.

The STS-70 crew patch, designed by the crewmembers, depicts the Shuttle Discovery orbiting Earth in the vast darkness of space. The primary mission of deploying TDRS-G is depicted by three gold stars, which represent the triad composed of spacecraft transmitting data to Earth through the TDRSS. The stylized red, white and blue ribbon represents the American goal of linking space exploration to the advancement of all humankind.

Mission Commander for STS-70 is Terence T. "Tom" Henricks, a veteran pilot of two shuttle flights. Kevin R. Kregel, the pilot, will make his first trip into space. Three mission specialists are assigned to STS-70. Nancy Jane Currie (formerly Sherlock) has flown in space once before, along with Donald A. Thomas, who holds a Ph.D. in materials science. Space rookie Mary Ellen Weber earned her Ph.D. in physical chemistry before joining the astronaut corps.