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Article:

Air Force's X-37B Space Plane Launching on Secret Mission Friday

by [Mike Wall](#), SPACE.com Senior Writer

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Despite its robotic nature, the X-37B space plane received a warm welcome from Air Force crews at Vandenberg. Here, the vehicle appears to be undergoing safing procedures after landing on Dec. 3 at 1:16 a.m. PST (0916 GMT). Significant weathering, or discoloration, can be seen on the spacecraft's upper thermal blanket insulation.

CREDIT: USAF/Vandenberg Air Force Base

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The U.S. Air Force's secretive X-37B space plane is poised to launch on its second mission Friday (March 4), though what exactly it will be doing once it leaves the ground remains a mystery.

The [robotic X-37B mini-shuttle](#) is slated to lift off from Cape Canaveral, Fla., on Friday atop an Atlas 5 rocket, weather permitting. Its launch window opens at 3:39 p.m. EST (2039 GMT), according to the launch provider United Launch Alliance, which is overseeing the flight.

This will mark the second space mission for the Air Force's X-37B space plane program — but the first for this particular plane. It is the second X-37B spacecraft built for the Air Force by Boeing and carries the name Orbital Test Vehicle 2, or OTV-2.

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The [first X-37B spacecraft](#) launched in April 2010 and returned to Earth in December after an apparently successful test flight, though the details of that mission – like this upcoming flight – are classified. The first X-37B mission lasted 225 days. [[Photos: First Flight of the X-37B Space Plane](#)]

Current forecasts for Friday's X-37B launch try predict a 70 percent chance that bad weather may delay the flight, Air Force official have said.

A small robotic space shuttle

With its blunt nose and stubby wings, the unmanned X-37B spacecraft resembles a miniature version of NASA's space shuttles. The vehicle was originally developed as part of a NASA project that was shifted to the military when funding ran dry.



The U.S. Air Force's X-37B Orbital Test Vehicle is shown inside its payload fairing during encapsulation at the Astrotech facility in Titusville, Fla., ahead of a planned April 2010 launch from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.

CREDIT: USAF

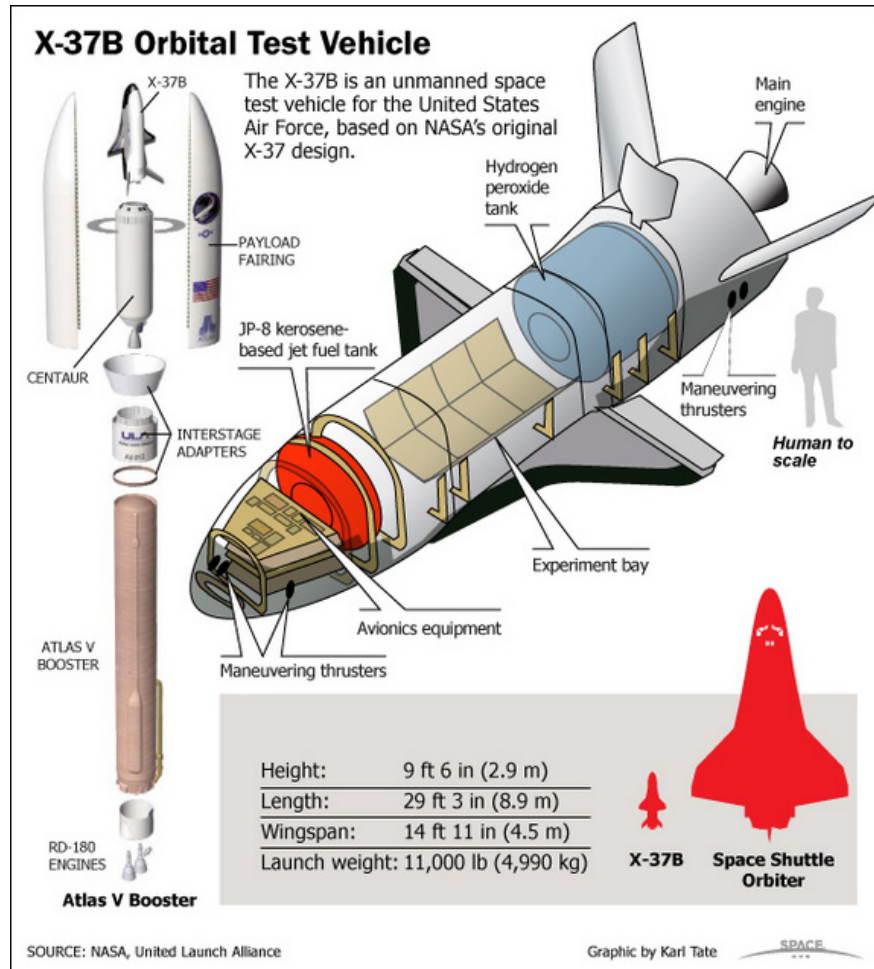
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The spacecraft is about 29 feet (almost 9 meters) long and 14 feet wide (nearly 4.5 meters), with a payload bay about the size of a pickup truck bed. It is designed to launch vertically inside the nose cone of a rocket, stay in orbit for months at a time, and then land horizontally on a runway like a space shuttle.

But unlike NASA's shuttles, the X-37B space plane does everything autonomously. It also has a solar array that is deployed from its payload bay to generate power during its months-long stay in orbit [[Infographic: The X-37B Space Plane](#)]

"There is no one on the ground with a joystick flying it," Lt. Col. Troy Giese, X-37B program manager in the Air Force Rapid Capabilities Office, said before the first X-37B mission blasted off last year.

The Air Force Rapid Capabilities Office oversees the X-37B space plane program for the U.S. military.



CREDIT: Karl Tate, SPACE.com
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Secret second test flight

Air Force officials have not said much about first X-37B mission, and they're been similarly tight-lipped about the upcoming second flight with the OTV-2 vehicle.

But the Air Force has said that the X-37B spacecraft should help the Air Force test and demonstrate new technologies — such as guidance, navigation and control systems — that could be used on future satellites.

The secrecy surrounding the X-37B has led to some speculation that the plane could be a [space weapon](#) of some sort. But Air Force officials have [repeatedly denied that charge](#), and some experts have postulated that it is a platform for space reconnaissance.

The X-37B is built by Boeing's Space and Intelligence Systems division. It can fly long, extended missions because of its solar array power system, which allows it to stay in orbit for up to 270 days, Air Force officials have said.

Originally, NASA used the space plane as an experimental test bed until funding for the project ran out in 2004.

The vehicle then passed to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and was ultimately turned over to the Air Force in 2006.

You can follow SPACE.com senior writer Mike Wall on Twitter: [@michaeldwall](#).

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Us 1 hours ago
Haha, number two will crash as number one did. US has got the the supremacy in poverty.
Reply

LS650 1 hours ago
It's looking for Nibiru!
Reply

Anonymous 2 hours ago
All these Euro nations and the World think the USA has had is goods days they insult us and even say they don't want the US Dollar as a world standard - just wait we will come back STRONG and we will remember who our true friends were and to Hell with the rest of them--
Reply [1 replies](#)

Jutta Schmelz 58 minutes ago
Is it the fault of the "European nations and the World" that the US is going through a recession? Remember, the American dollar is nothing more than a piece of paper.
Reply

grapes 3 hours ago
That's the Good Old USof A Baby!! We have the best minds in the world and always will because of our democratic free society, and CAPITALISM! Capitalism is what made this country rich beyond all other countries wildest dreams. We might not have the best idea for society, but until a better one comes along nothing beats it! And that's really saying something; think about it, China has 1.3Billion and India has 1.2Billion and we have only 300Million. But who is it that comes out with the biggest and the best of almost everything in the world. (but all Obama can talk about is that China has the fastest computer!)
Reply

Brad Jensen 3 hours ago
It's doing either photoreconnaissance or ground radar imaging, and bringing the results back to earth. The image files are too big to send , and besides they are completely secure if they are brought back physically instead of being transmitted.
Maybe now they can find Bin Laudin, and Obama's missing birth certificate.
Reply [2 replies](#)

Tom Howard 55 minutes ago
OH that one will be shot down then!!
Reply

charles 2 hours ago
Thanks for the chuckle Brad.
Reply

thomasSERVO 4 hours ago
It's probably going up to study Chalile Sheen's ego
Reply

Earl 4 hours ago
This is obviously preparation for an attack on Uranus.
Reply

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RobairVictor 6 hours ago

-Owing that the 'LoonieLanding' was another HoloHoax type jewZionist-media Bank'ster-tyranny 'BigLie'-event, -they finally acknowledge that the Astronauts are little more than 'useless-eaters' up there; --plus this SpacePlane can thus edge closer out to the VanAllen-belt than can humanoids. Amazing how stupid most college-brainwashed are, -but thanks to the Aryan-internet invention, many are now putting 2 & 2 together and connecting the dots! Entire usFed.Gov't. is a sham of corruption, shameful deceit, and warmongering, --orchestrated by the Rothschild/Rockefeller-mafia et'al...!!!

Reply [6 replies](#)



T-Mac 3 hours ago

Scary! Robair is extremely scary. Never on the moon huh? Now we know who the real loony is.

Reply



Wow 3 hours ago

Man, you better lay off of whatever you've been taking. I think you got a bad batch, bro. I took a trip like that once and ended up in Tijuana married to a goat. Keep it mellow, man.

Reply



PPP 4 hours ago

Gee Robair have some opinions, don't be so wishy washy !

Reply



SuddenlyAware 4 hours ago

Thanks Bro. That explains so much.

Reply



Anonymous 5 hours ago

The degree of delusionary thought exhibited is astounding.....simply astounding.

Reply [1 replies](#)



Major Tom 3 hours ago

Perhaps it's a fake 'false flag' post to 'inoculate' you against certain concepts and ideas. Tie one or two plausible idea with a few off the wall ones, and the whole 'raft' sinks together.

Reply



HorizonScanner 6 hours ago

USA must maintain supreme capability to travel fast to Luna. We cannot, and will not, permit China to colonize the moon. And, they will. They will obtain exclusive control of Helium 3. They will build cities on Luna whereby life on Terra will be defined by the China imperative. As of now, China has the wealth, the technology, the brains, and the DESIRE. China does not need or want American permission. As far as China is concerned, America is YESTERDAY, and our Space Force technology (Boeing) is for SALE.

Reply [1 replies](#)



farley 5 hours ago

Hilarious, the Chinese DONT have the technology. They've never been to the Moon, they dont have anything close to our space shuttle (1970's tech), they contributed very little to the international space station. Russia is light years ahead of them tech wise and we are 1,000 times ahead of them.

Reply



smsranger 6 hours ago

Probably going up to monitor Comet Elenin...

Reply

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