

U.S. Astronaut Joins Mir Crew

Space Voyage To Break Record For Americans

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Astronaut Shannon Lucid joined the crew of Russia's space station Mir on Sunday, 11 hours after the space shuttle Atlantis docked with the station.

Lucid is the first American woman to live on Mir, and her mission marks the beginning of a U.S. presence in space for the next two years.

Five more Americans are supposed to live on Mir. By the time the last one leaves in 1998, an international space station should be built and housing U.S.-Russian crews.

Lucid, a 53-year-old biochemist, is settled in for five months—the longest U.S. stay in space.

NASA officials expect her to be busier than the only other American to live on Mir, Norman Thagard, whose science equipment did not arrive until the end of his nearly four-month stay last year.

Frank Culbertson, director of the U.S. space agency's shuttle-Mir program, said it may take a while for Lucid to feel at home and "get into the swing of things" with her two Russian crewmates. But he's confident she'll adjust well to her new, rather isolated surroundings.

"She's talked to Norm, so she knows what it's like to live on the Mir,"



NASA VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Russian cosmonauts and U.S. astronauts exchange Mir space station after the spacecraft docked with gifts on Sunday in the base block module of Russia's the shuttle Atlantis.

Culbertson said. "She's talked to the cosmonauts who have lived there, so I think she's mentally prepared."

She won't go hungry while awaiting Atlantis' return for her in August. NASA made sure before her flight that she got to choose her Mir meals. Thagard had to settle for whatever food was there: Thin to

begin with, he lost 17½ pounds aboard the station.

"I've personally talked to Shannon, and she's very happy with the food," Culbertson said.

After their busy schedule Sunday, Atlantis' crew went to sleep for about 10 hours, two hours longer than usual. The Mir crew, including

Lucid, turned in for 11 hours.

The next task of the shuttle-Mir mission will begin Wednesday, when Atlantis astronauts Linda Godwin and Rich Clifford will conduct the first spacewalk while the shuttle is united with Mir.

Atlantis is scheduled to return to Earth next Sunday.