

12/11/92: CASSINI SATURN MISSION, SPACECRAFT FINALIZED

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NASA's Cassini mission to Saturn has passed a major milestone with the completion this week of a project-wide critical design review.

The review, which included a comprehensive examination of the mission and spacecraft, closed today at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif.

"We are very pleased with the outcome of the review and the status of all elements of the project," said Richard J. Spehalski, Cassini Project Manager at JPL. "The design process is moving forward very briskly."

In addition to JPL Cassini team members, the review included presentations by Dr. Hamid Hassan, European Space Agency Project Manager for Cassini's Huygens Titan probe and Dr. Romeo Pernice of the Italian Space Agency which is contributing Cassini's high-gain antenna and science instrumentation.

In other recent activities related to Cassini, NASA issued letters to scientific investigators formally confirming the mission's experiment payload.

The 12 experiments onboard the Cassini orbiter were tentatively selected in 1990, subject to evaluation during an "accommodation period" until the confirmation was issued. Another six experiments are on ESA's Huygens probe.

Planned for launch on a Titan IV-Centaur in October 1997, Cassini will fly by Venus twice as well as by Earth and Jupiter before arriving at Saturn in November 2004 to begin a 4-year orbital tour of the ringed planet and its 18 moons. The Huygens probe will descend to the surface of one of the moons, Titan, in June 2005.

JPL manages the Cassini mission for NASA's Office of Space Science and Applications, Washington, D.C.