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NASA prepares for LRO's Thursday launch

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NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) and Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS) rolled aboard their Atlas V rocket to the launch pad at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida on Wednesday morning, in preparation for launch on Thursday, NASA said.

The spacecraft left its processing facility at 10:02 EDT (1402 GMT) and arrived at the pad about 35 minutes later.

The spacecraft are scheduled to lift off together on Thursday, June 18, with three attempts possible at 5:12 p.m., 5:22 p.m. and 5:32 p.m.. If launch slips to Friday, June 19, the launch opportunities would be 6:41 p.m., 6:51 p.m. and 7:01 p.m..

The LRO is scheduled for a one-year exploration mission at a polar orbit of about 31 miles, or 50 kilometers, the closest any spacecraft has orbited the moon. Its primary objective is to conduct investigations to prepare for future explorations of the moon.

The LCROSS will search for water ice on the moon by sending the spent upper-stage Centaur rocket to impact part of a polar crater in permanent shadows. The LCROSS will fly into the plume of dust left by the impact and measure the properties before also colliding with the lunar surface.

Source:Xinhuanet

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