

Atlantis mission extended 2 days

by UPI

HOUSTON - NASA announced Monday that two days have been added to the U.S. space shuttle Atlantis' mission to try to fix a gap in the spacecraft's thermal blanket.

The announcement came as two astronauts, Jim Reilly and John "Danny" Olivas, finished the first spacewalk of the mission. A fourth spacewalk is being added to the schedule.

Atlantis lifted off Friday from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida and docked Sunday with the international space station. The mission was delayed for weeks after the shuttle was damaged on the launch pad by a severe hail storm.

The mission, originally scheduled for 11 days, will now last for 13.

During more than six hours outside the space station, Reilly and Olivas installed data, power and cooling connections between the station and units with new sets of solar panels.

NASA managers said astronauts will try to fix the insulation that peeled back during launch, KWTX-TV in Waco, Texas, reported.

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