SPACEFLIGHT

Cosmonauts to fly Chernobyl mission
BY TIM FURNISS

T

hree cosmonauts from the
Ukraine are to fly on a
Soyuz TM mission to the Mir
space station next year to mon-
itor the area around the Cher-
nobyl nuclear power plant and

the city of Kiev for "the after-
effects of the accident", in 1986,
according to Radio Kiev.
The Soviet manned space pro-
gramme for 1992 remains intact
and, with funding commitments
from several republics interested
in flying their own cosmonaut

researchers, future visits to Mir
seem assured.
The launch of two more mod-
ules to Mir in 1992 is also on
schedule, according to Pyotr
Klimuk, new head of the Yuri
Gagarin Cosmonaut Training
Centre. Incorporation of the

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modules, Priroda and Spektr,
will complete Mir's assembly.
A cosmonaut flight engineer
from Kazakhstan flew a mission
last October and a candidate
from Uzbekskaya is in training.
The Ukraine crew is likely to
comprise a commander and
flight engineer from the existing
Star City cadre, and journalist
Yuri Krykun, who is being spon-
sored by the Ukraine. •

NASA Shuttle cuts

threaten flights
A

NASA order to cut $1 bil-
lion from Space Shuttle op-
erating costs between 1992 and
1996 is likely to lead to the
cutting of two flights next year.
The eight missions planned
for 1992 could, therefore, be
reduced to six and it seems
unlikely that a flight rate of
more than eight missions each
year thereafter will be achieved.
This is in response to the NASA
headquarters directive to reduce
operating costs by 3% each year
until 1996.
William Lenoir, associate ad-
ministrator for spaceflight, says:
"For the first time in the pro-
gramme we have the capacity to
fly more missions than we can
afford to."
Additional difficulties have re-
sulted in a lack of flexibility
allowed by NASA to handle
problems for planned 1992 mis-
sions. The new orbiter En-
deavour is already at least a
month behind schedule for
STS49, while the earlier STS45/
Atlas 1/Atlantis mission is likely
to be delayed.
The STS42 mission, scheduled
for early February, flying the
International Microgravity Labo-
rator aboard Discovery, must be
flown on schedule to free the
hardware for the Japanese Spa-
celab J mission later in the year.
Meanwhile, STS44/At/antis,
scheduled to be launched from
Pad 39A at the Kennedy Space
Center on 19 November, carry-
ing an infra-red geostationary
early-warning satellite, has been
delayed for about a week to
replace the instrument measur-
ing unit on the satellite's 1US
upper stage. Atlantis is sched-
uled to land at the Kennedy
Space Center after a ten-day
mission, the sixth this year. •

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