
First Cargo Spacecraft to Make Three Rendezvous with Tiangong-2



China's first cargo spacecraft Tianzhou-1 is expected to dock with the orbiting Tiangong-2 space lab three times after its planned launch in April, sources said on March 4.

Tianzhou-1 will be launched into space from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in south China's Hainan Province aboard a Long March-7 Y2 carrier rocket, according to a spokesperson for China's manned space program.

Tiangong-2 has been scheduled for three refuelings and the carrying out of experiments and tests. During the journey, Tianzhou-1 will orbit solo for about three months and together with Tiangong-2 for about two months after their rendezvous. At the end of the mission, Tianzhou-1 will leave the orbit and return to Earth, while Tiangong-2 will remain in orbit and continue its experiments.

The Tianzhou-1 mission will complete the second phase of the country's manned space program. This is crucial to China's final step towards establishing a space station around 2022.