

After Photos, Space Crew Lands Safely

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Rescuers and other personnel clustering around a Soyuz TMA-20 space capsule in the Kazakh steppe Tuesday. **Mikhail Metzel**

ALMATY, Kazakhstan — A Soyuz capsule delivered an international trio of astronauts back to Earth on Tuesday after six months on the International Space Station, parachuting through clear skies toward a safe landing on the Kazakh steppe.

Cosmonaut and station commander Dmitry Kondratyev and flight engineers Catherine "Cady" Coleman, an American, and Italian Paolo Nespoli touched down aboard the Soyuz TMA-20 craft at 6:27 a.m. Moscow time.

"They have landed. Everything was fine," Irina Manshilina, spokeswoman for Russian Mission Control, said by telephone from outside Moscow.

NASA TV described a "textbook entry" and upright landing for the capsule, 147 kilometers southeast of the central Kazakh city of Zhezkazgan.

The soft landing may help to allay growing concern about relying solely on Russia for flights to the \$100 billion space station, which is shared by 16 nations, just before NASA mothballs its

shuttle program later this year.

NASA TV commentators described the crew as appearing in exceptionally good shape as they emerged from the capsule.

Kondratyev drank water and appeared relaxed as rescue crews wiped sweat from his brow. Coleman smiled as she descended from the space capsule and was carried to a reclining chair. Nespoli was last to emerge.

As a parting gift to NASA, Kondratyev flew the spacecraft out to about 200 meters from the International Space Station while Nespoli snapped pictures and recorded video of the U.S. space shuttle Endeavour parked at the orbital outpost.

The images shot before the capsule's descent to Earth will be the first of a shuttle and the station together from a remote vantage point, with a planetary view of Earth in the background.

Three new station crew members — cosmonaut Sergei Volkov, NASA astronaut Michael Fossum and Japan's Satoshi Furukawa — are scheduled to launch from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on June 7.

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