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Astronauts Confirmed for This Week's ISS Expedition

By The Moscow Times

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Russian officials on Monday confirmed which astronauts would blast off for the International Space Station on May 29 aboard the Soyuz TMA-09M. The launch is scheduled for 12:31 Moscow time.

Russian cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin, and astronauts Karen Nyberg of NASA and Luca Parmitano of the European Space Agency are expected to be the main crew. Russia's Mikhail Tyurin, NASA's Richard Mastracchio and Japan's Koichi Wakata are prepared to serve as backups.

"The main and backup crews have been cleared for the spaceflight by the medical committee," said Sergei Krikalev, director of the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center.

This will be the fourth spaceflight for Yurchikhin, who will assume command of Expedition 37 once US astronaut Christopher Cassidy and Russian cosmonauts Pavel Vinogradov

and Alexander Misurkin undock in November. This will be flight engineer Nyberg's first flight aboard a Soyuz, though she flew to the ISS on the shuttle Discovery in 2008. Parmitano has no prior spaceflight experience.

The Soyuz is scheduled to dock at the ISS at 6:16 Moscow time (2:16 GMT), after about six hours in flight. Until March, it had taken two days for crews to go from Earth to the space station.

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