

Space Station Crew Lands Safely in Kazakhstan

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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International Space Station crew member, Russian cosmonaut Mikhail Tyurin, is helped by ground search and rescue personnel.

The first Japanese man to command a space mission and crewmates from the U.S. and Russia landed safely in Kazakhstan on Wednesday, wrapping up a 188-day stay aboard the International Space Station.

"We have confirmation of landing," a NASA television presenter said during a live broadcast as the capsule with the space trio touched down in a Kazakh steppe, 148 kilometers southeast of the town of Dzhezkazgan at 07:58 a.m local time.

"The crew are well and in good health."

Search and recovery forces soon converged on the capsule, which was charred by extreme heat on re-entry, and opened the hatch, extracting the crew.

Photo Gallery: [Space Station Crew Returns to Earth](#)

Returning to Earth were space station commander Koichi Wakata, NASA astronaut Rick Mastracchio and Russian cosmonaut Mikhail Tyurin.

A smiling Tyurin was the first to experience Earth gravity after six months in orbit, taken from the capsule and carried to a semi-reclined chair, while a doctor checked his pulse and blood pressure.

Tyurin, whose crew had symbolically carried a torch of Russia's Sochi Winter Olympics to orbit, was then shown making a call via a satellite telephone. "The landing was wonderful. Everything was just perfect," he said.

"Misha, what would you like to have right now?" a Roscosmos worker asked Tyurin. "Some red wine, please," Tyurin replied.

An upbeat Wakata, a space veteran with four missions and a total of more than 300 days spent in space, joined Tyurin shortly, seated nearby on a warm and sunny day.

Finally, Mastracchio was extracted from the spacecraft, and the trio were then carried to an orange inflatable tent set up nearby to undergo medical checks before their flight to Star City outside Moscow.

Exciting in Space

The returning space trio climbed inside their Russian Soyuz capsule and departed the orbital outpost at 6:36 p.m. as it flew 418 kilometers over Mongolia.

"What an exciting time we shared in this increment," Wakata said during a change-of-command ceremony broadcast on NASA Television. NASA astronaut Steven Swanson now takes control of the station.

Swanson and cosmonauts Alexander Skvortsov and Oleg Artemyev will manage the station, a \$100-billion project of 15 nations, on their own, until new crewmates arrive on May 28.

Until Tuesday, the station partnership, headed by the U.S. and Russia, had been relatively untouched by the rhetoric and economic sanctions stemming from Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula.

But the program's protected status shifted after Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's deputy prime minister for space and defense, told news agencies on Tuesday that he would not support a U.S. and European proposal to extend the space station beyond 2020.

Rogozin, who is among 11 Russian officials sanctioned by the U.S. also said he would ban the sale of Russian-made rocket engines, which are used to launch U.S. military satellites. United Launch Alliance, a partnership of Lockheed Martin and Boeing, use the Russian-made RD-180 engines to power the first stage of its Atlas 5 rockets.

Apparently exempt from Rogozin's ban are Soyuz flight services, now the only means of taking crew to the space station following the retirement of U.S. space shuttles in 2011.

NASA pays Russia more than \$60 million per person to fly its astronauts on Soyuz capsules and is expected to continue to do so until at least 2017.

See also:

[Russia Retaliates Against U.S. Space Program in Response to Sanctions](#)

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