

Russians Hike Price for Space Flights

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida — The Federal Space Agency is raising the amount it charges NASA to fly astronauts to the International Space Station by more than 20 percent.

The two space agencies signed a new contract raising the price to nearly \$63 million on Monday.

With space shuttles being retired, NASA has relied exclusively on Russia for space station crew transport since late 2009 at a cost until now of \$51 million a person.

NASA's \$753 million contract modification with the Federal Space Agency covers crew transportation, rescue and related services from 2014 through June 2016 for 12 space station crew members.

The contract also covers about 50 kilograms of cargo per flight to the station, about 17 kilograms of cargo returned to Earth and disposal of about 30 kilograms of trash.

"If we are to win the future and out-build our competitors, it's essential that we make this program a success," NASA chief Charlie Bolden said in a statement.

The next launch to the space station is scheduled for early next month, when a Soyuz rocket will lift off with U.S. astronaut Ronald Garan and cosmonauts Alexander Samokutyayev and Andrei Borisenko. The launch had been scheduled for March 30, but the Federal Space Agency on Monday postponed it over a glitch in the Soyuz's communication system. National news agencies said the launch would now take place between April 5 and 10.

The delay could raise U.S. concerns about relying solely on Russia for rides to the space station.

The shuttles are being retired due to high operating costs and to free up funds for NASA to develop new spaceships that can travel to the moon, asteroids and other destinations beyond the station's orbit.

President Barack Obama's administration hopes commercial U.S. companies will develop the capability to fly people to the station, so NASA can purchase flight services domestically.

The administration's 2012 budget request for NASA includes \$700 million to spur commercial crew space transportation services.

The International Space Station is a \$100 billion project of 16 nations. NASA plans two final shuttle flights, in April and June, to outfit the station, which orbits about 355 kilometers above Earth.

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