

Russian Soyuz Carries New Crew to Space Station After Delay

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The International Space Station (ISS) crew members (L to R) Kjell Lindgren of the U.S., Oleg Kononenko of Russia and Kimiya Yui of Japan walk after donning space suits at the Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, July 23, 2015.

A Russian Soyuz capsule carrying three new crew for the International Space Station arrived at the orbital outpost on Wednesday after a two-month launch delay, a NASA TV broadcast showed.

Veteran Russian cosmonaut Oleg Kononenko and rookie astronauts Kjell Lindgren of NASA and Japan's Kimiya Yui blasted off aboard a Russian Soyuz rocket at 5:02 p.m. local time from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

They arrived less than six hours later to begin a five-month mission aboard the station, a \$100-billion laboratory that flies about 400 km above Earth.

The trio had been set to fly in May, but Russia delayed the mission after a botched launch of a similar Soyuz rocket on April 28. That accident stranded a Progress cargo ship in an orbit too low to reach the station. Nine days later, the capsule, loaded with three tons of equipment and supplies, fell back into Earth's atmosphere and was incinerated.

Accident investigators determined that the Progress failed to separate properly from the Soyuz rocket's third-stage engine. The Soyuz returned to flight on July 3, successfully launching a replacement load of cargo to the station.

"We're confident in the rocket ... we're all very excited to launch," Lindgren, 42, told a pre-launch news conference.

Two U.S. companies that fly cargo to the station under contract with the U.S. space agency also lost capsules after recent failed launches. Privately owned SpaceX and Orbital ATK remain grounded following accidents last month and in October 2014, respectively. A fourth station resupply line is operated by Japan, which is scheduled to fly again in August.

"It's certainly no fun to see several of the cargo vehicles undergo mishaps," Lindgren said. "It underscores the difficulty of this industry and ... how unforgiving the space environment is."

The arrival of Lindgren, Kononenko, 51, and Yui, 45, returns the space station to a full six-member crew for the first time in six weeks.

"We look forward to seeing them," U.S. station flight engineer Scott Kelly said during an inflight interview on Tuesday.

Kelly and Russia's Mikhail Kornienko are participating in the station's first year-long mission. Also aboard is veteran cosmonaut Gennady Padalka, the current station commander.

The Soyuz capsule arrived on Wednesday with just one pair of its power-producing solar arrays deployed. NASA mission commentator Kyle Herring said the glitch had no impact on the capsule's flight and docking.

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