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Putin Gives Top State Honor to U.S. Astronaut Who Survived Russian Rocket Emergency

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Nick Hague **Bill Ingalls / NASA**

President Vladimir Putin has presented U.S. astronaut Nick Hague with one of Russia's top state honors a year after the astronaut survived an emergency onboard a Russian spacecraft.

Hague, along with Russian cosmonaut Alexei Ovchinin, made a dramatic emergency landing in the steppes of Kazakhstan in October 2018 when a booster rocket on their Soyuz launch vehicle failed — the first such accident in post-Soviet history. Footage from inside the Soyuz showed the two men being shaken around as the rocket failed minutes after blastoff, but neither needed medical treatment.

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Putin awarded Hague the Order of Courage for "high professionalism shown in the line of

duty in high-risk conditions during an emergency," according to an Oct. 4 decree published on Russia's official government portal Tuesday.

Hague and Ovchinin made it back to the ISS in March and returned to Earth after a 203-day mission Thursday.

The U.S. relies on Russia to carry its astronauts to the International Space Station (ISS) which was launched 20 years ago. NASA tentatively plans to send its first crew to the ISS using a SpaceX craft instead of a Soyuz next April.

Putin recently granted the Order of Courage posthumously to 10 of the 14 sailors killed in a fire on a secret nuclear submarine near the Arctic in July. He gave the other four submariners Russia's highest state award: the title of Hero of Russia.

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