

Bush signs bill to buy a Russian Soyuz

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NASA can purchase a Russian Soyuz, the only spacecraft that can serve as a lifeboat for the International Space Station, under a bill signed this week.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration is permitted to purchase Soyuz through 2012. NASA had planned to build its own transport vehicle to the space station, but the project was canceled because of cost overruns, the Washington Times reported Friday.

President George Bush signed this week, the Iran Non-proliferation Amendments Act of 2005, which allows the space station to continue operating with its current logistics and calls for Russia to provide 11 three-person Soyuz missions, each lasting six months, for a total of 5 1/2 years.

Under the legislation, Cmdr. William McArthur, an American astronaut currently aboard the space station, will return in April aboard the Soyuz.

Before his mission, McArthur said: "Clearly, I need to stay until my replacement shows up. I've got a lot of confidence that once I get on orbit that the station program is going to get me home."

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