

ISS astronauts land safely in Kazakhstan

May 24 2011



The International Space Station crew of US astronaut Cady Coleman (L), Russian cosmonaut Dmitry Kondratiev (C) and Italian astronaut Paolo Nespoli are seen after their Soyuz capsule landed safely about 150 km south-east of the Kazakh town of Dzhezkazgan on May 24, 2011.

A Soyuz capsule brought back Italian, Russian and American astronauts from the International Space Station on Tuesday, with two of the space-suit clad crew phoning home from the Kazakh steppe.

"They have landed and all is well. They landed at approximately 0627 (0227 GMT)," a spokesman for mission control told AFP.

Russia's Dmitry Kondratyev, Paolo Nespoli of the European Space Agency, and NASA's Catherine Coleman landed "softly" in the correct location east of the town of Jezkazgan after 159 days in space, mission control said in a statement.

"All the operations in leaving orbit and landing went according to plan," mission control said. "The astronauts feel well."

Television footage showed the astronauts sitting wrapped in blankets and wearing sunglasses and Kondratyev and Coleman making calls on a satellite phone after emerging from the Soyuz-TMA capsule onto the sunny steppe.

Coleman smiled and chatted to a cosmonaut retrieval worker while holding a bouquet of flowers. Nespoli gave a thumbs up but looked pale as he was helped out of the capsule and carried in a chair to the medical tent.

Space travellers have trouble walking when they return to Earth after long stays in zero gravity.

Kondratyev, Coleman and Nespoli blasted off on December 15 and worked on the ISS under US commander Scott Kelly until his departure in March, when Kondratyev took over as commander.

On April 7, they were joined on the ISS by Russian cosmonauts Alexander Samokutyaev and Andrei Borisenko and US astronaut Ronald Garan.



The Russian Soyuz TMA-20 space capsule lands in Kazakhstan on May 24, 2011. Russia's Soyuz craft will later this year become the sole means for taking humans to the ISS when NASA takes its shuttles out of service, leaving the United States reliant on the more rudimentary Russian technology.

In May six US astronauts flew in on the Endeavour space shuttle in a mission led by Mark Kelly, the twin brother of Scott Kelly and the husband of US Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who suffered a brain injury in a shooting in January and is undergoing rehabilitation.

The shuttle will remain docked at the space station until May 30, returning to the United States on June 1.

Kondratyev made two space walks during his time on the ISS and also wrote a blog. It was his first trip to space after waiting 13 years. His teammates were more experienced, with Nespoli having made one previous flight and Coleman two.

Coleman took her flute into orbit and performed for the other astronauts. She also played a long-distance duet with Ian Anderson, the

founder of rock band Jethro Tull, a video of which NASA posted on its website.

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NASA said last week it is aiming to launch the Atlantis shuttle on July 8 with four US astronauts on board in the last-ever flight of the 30-year-old American shuttle programme.

Atlantis was initially set to launch in late June but was postponed after technical problems delayed the Endeavour mission.

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