

Space freighter burns up in suicide dive

October 3 2012

A giant supply ship burned up over the South Pacific early Wednesday in a self-destruct operation after a six-month mission to the International Space Station, the European Space Agency (ESA) said.

Laden with rubbish from the ISS, the Automated Transfer Vehicle (ATV) undocked from the orbital outpost last Friday to begin its final [manoeuvres](#).

"Edoardo Amaldi and its waste burnt up harmlessly in the [upper atmosphere](#) at 0130 GMT," ESA said in a press release.

Undocking had been delayed by three days because astronauts had sent the craft a wrong identification code.

Named after a 20th-century Italian physicist, the Edoardo Amaldi was the third of five ATVs that Europe is scheduled to supply for the ISS.

The robot craft, each the size of a London double-decker bus, are designed to make one-way trips, hauling up tonnes of food, water, air, equipment and other supplies for the ISS crew.

The ATVs also use on-board engines to boost the ISS, whose altitude drops because it is in low orbit and dragged by lingering atmospheric molecules.

At the end of their trip, filled with garbage and human waste, the craft detach and burn up in a controlled destruction over the least inhabited

part of the globe.

The final two ATVs should be launched in April 2013 and April 2014 respectively, ESA said.

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