

Three-man space crew returns safely to Earth (Update)

May 14 2013, by Vladimir Isachenkov



The Russian Soyuz space capsule, carrying U.S. astronaut Thomas Marshburn, Russian cosmonaut Roman Romanenko and Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, lands some 150 km (90 miles) southeast of the town of Dzhezkazgan in central Kazakhstan, Tuesday, May 14, 2013. The Soyuz space capsule carrying a three-man crew returning from a five-month mission to the International Space Station landed safely Tuesday on the steppes of Kazakhstan. (AP Photo/Sergei Remezov, Pool)

A Soyuz space capsule with a three-man crew returning from a five-

month mission to the International Space Station landed safely Tuesday on the steppes of Kazakhstan.

Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, American Thomas Marshburn and Russian Roman Romanenko landed as planned southeast of the town of Dzhezkazgan at 8:31 a.m. local time Tuesday (0231 GMT; 10:31 p.m. EDT Monday).

Live footage on NASA TV showed the Soyuz TMA-07M capsule slowly descending by parachute onto the sun-drenched steppes under clear skies. Russian search and rescue helicopters hovered over the landing site for a quick recovery effort.

Rescue teams moved quickly to help the crew in their bulky spacesuits exit out of the capsule, charred by the fiery re-entry through the atmosphere. They were then put into reclining chairs to start adjusting to the Earth's gravity after 146 days in space.

The three astronauts smiled as they chatted with space agency officials and doctors who were checking their condition. Hadfield, who served as the space station's commander, gave a thumbs-up sign. They made quick phone calls to family members and friends before being carried to a medical tent for a routine medical check-up prior to being flown home.



This image provided by NASA shows astronaut Chris Hadfield recording the first music video from space Sunday May 12, 2013. The song was his cover version of David Bowie's Space Oddity. Hadfield and astronaut Thomas Marshburn are scheduled to return to earth Monday May 13, 2013. (AP Photo/NASA, Chris Hadfield)

NASA spokesman Josh Byerly said on NASA TV by telephone from the landing site that the three returning astronauts were fine. "They look like they are doing pretty well," he said.

Hadfield, 53, an engineer and former test pilot from Milton, Ontario, was Canada's first professional astronaut to live aboard the space station and became the first Canadian in charge of a spacecraft. He relinquished command of the space station on Sunday.

"It's just been an extremely fulfilling and amazing experience end to end," Hadfield told Mission Control on Monday. "From this Canadian to all the rest of them, I offer an enormous debt of thanks." He was referring to all those in the Canadian Space Agency who helped make his flight possible.



In this image made from video provided by NASA, astronaut Christopher Cassidy, foreground, holds a power wrench as he stows away a suspect coolant pump on the International Space Station on Saturday, May 11, 2013. Thomas Marshburn is at left. The two astronauts made the spacewalk to replace the pump after flakes of frozen ammonia coolant were spotted outside the station on Thursday. (AP Photo/NASA)

Hadfield bowed out of orbit by posting a music video on YouTube on Sunday—his own custom version of David Bowie's "Space Oddity." It's believed to be the first music video made in space, according to NASA.

"With deference to the genius of David Bowie, here's Space Oddity, recorded on Station. A last glimpse of the World," Hadfield said via Twitter.



In this image provided by NASA the Soyuz spacecraft is seen as it lands with Expedition 35 Commander Chris Hadfield of the Canadian Space Agency, NASA Flight Engineer Tom Marshburn and Russian Flight Engineer Roman Romanenko of the Russian Federal Space Agency in a remote area near the town of Zhezkazgan, Kazakhstan, on Tuesday, May 14, 2013. Hadfield, Marshburn and Romanenko returned from five months onboard the International Space Station where they served as members of the Expedition 34 and 35 crews. (AP Photo/NASA, Carla Cioffi)

Hadfield sang often in orbit, using a guitar already aboard the complex, and even took part in a live, Canadian coast-to-coast concert in February that included the Barenaked Ladies' Ed Robertson and a youth choir.

The five-minute video posted Sunday drew a salute from Bowie's official Facebook page: "It's possibly the most poignant version of the song ever created."



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A three-man U.S.-Russian crew is staying on the space station and will

be joined in two weeks by the next trio of astronauts.

The 2011 retirement of the U.S. shuttle fleet has left Russia's Soyuz spacecraft as the sole means to ferry crews to and from the space outpost, and the unmanned cargo version of the Soyuz, the Progress, delivers the bulk of station supplies.

The latest Progress, launched last month, suffered a glitch when an antenna on its navigation system failed to deploy, but it docked successfully at the space outpost despite the flaw.



In this image provided by NASA Expedition 35 Commander Chris Hadfield of the Canadian Space Agency, left, Russian Flight Engineer Roman Romanenko of the Russian Federal Space Agency, center, and NASA Flight Engineer Tom Marshburn sit in chairs outside the Soyuz Capsule just minutes after they landed in a remote area outside the town of Dzhezkazgan, Kazakhstan, on Tuesday morning, May 14, 2013. Hadfield, Romanenko and Marshburn are returning from five months onboard the International Space Station where they served as

members of the Expedition 34 and 35 crews. (AP Photo/NASA, Carla Cioffi)

Russia's space agency chief Vladimir Popovkin told reporters Tuesday that the failure was caused by glue that got stuck in the moving parts of the antenna's unfolding mechanism. He said that Russian engineers conducted checks on the already assembled Soyuz and the Progress ships to prevent the glitch from reoccurring.

The U.S.-based Space Exploration Technologies Corp., or SpaceX, already is making cargo shipments to the space station. Its founder and chief designer, Elon Musk, has said the company could be ferrying astronauts aboard improved versions of its Dragon capsules by 2015.

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