

Space station shipment launched from Virginia

July 14 2014, by Aerospace Writer Marcia Dunn



Orbital's Antares rocket carrying the Cygnus Spacecraft lifts off from the Mid-Atlantic Regional spaceport at Wallops Flight Facility on Sunday, July 13, 2014 while a herd of cattle graze in a pasture nearby in Atlantic, Va. The rocket will carry the Cygnus spacecraft filled with over 3,000 pounds of supplies to the International Space Station in the company's second contracted cargo delivery flight to the space station for NASA. (AP Photo/Eastern Shore News, Jay Diem)

A commercial cargo ship rocketed toward the International Space Station on Sunday, carrying food, science samples and new odor-

resistant gym clothes for the resident crew.

Orbital Sciences Corp. launched its Cygnus capsule from the Virginia coast, its third space station delivery for NASA.

"It's like Christmas in July," said Frank Culbertson, an executive vice president at Orbital Sciences and former astronaut.

Daylight and clouds limited visibility, but observers from North Carolina to New Jersey still had a shot at seeing the rising Antares rocket. It resembled a bright light in the early afternoon sky.

Its destination, the space station, was soaring 260 miles (418 kilometers) above Australia when the Cygnus took flight. The unmanned capsule should arrive there Wednesday.

This newest Cygnus contains more than 3,000 pounds (1,360 kilograms) of supplies, much of it food. Also on board: mini-satellites, science samples, equipment and experimental exercise clothes. NASA said the new type of clothing is resistant to bacteria and odor buildup. So the astronauts won't smell as much during their two hours of daily workout in orbit and they'll require fewer clothing changes.



A flock of birds scatter after being startled by the sound of Orbital's Antares rocket launching from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport at Wallops flight Facility on Sunday, July 13, 2014. The rocket will carry the Cygnus spacecraft filled with over 3,000 pounds of supplies to the International Space Station in the company's second contracted cargo delivery flight to the space station for NASA. (AP Photo/Eastern Shore News, Jay Diem)

NASA is paying for the delivery service. The space agency hired two companies—the Virginia-based Orbital Sciences and California's SpaceX—to keep the space station well stocked once the shuttle program ended. The international partners also make shipments; the European Space Agency, for example, will launch its final supply ship in 1½ weeks from French Guiana.

This particular Cygnus delivery was delayed a few months by various problems, including additional engine inspections and, most recently, bad weather at the Wallops Island launch site. The delays added to the

tension for NASA's human exploration chief, Bill Gerstenmaier. He said he breathed a sigh of relief at liftoff given all the critical equipment on board, not to mention all the meals.



Spectators watch as the Orbital Sciences Corporation Antares rocket launches with the Cygnus spacecraft onboard from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility, Sunday, July 13, 2014, Atlantic, Va. The Cygnus spacecraft is filled with over 3,000 pounds of supplies for the International Space Station, including science experiments, experiment hardware, spare parts, and crew provisions. (AP Photo/NASA, Joel Kowsky)

The Cygnus will remain at the [space station](#) for about a month. It will be filled with trash and cut loose for a fiery re-entry. Unlike the SpaceX Dragon capsule, the Cygnus is not built to return safely to Earth.



The Orbital Sciences Corporation Antares rocket launches with the Cygnus spacecraft onboard, Sunday, July 13, 2014, at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. The rocket will carry the Cygnus spacecraft filled with over 3,000 pounds of supplies to the International Space Station in the company's second contracted cargo delivery flight to the space station for NASA. (AP Photo/NASA, Bill Ingalls)

Saturday, meanwhile, marked the 5,000th day of continuous human habitation at the 260-mile-high outpost. Six men currently are on board, representing the United States, Russia and Germany.

"Humans are explorers!" German astronaut Alexander Gerst said via Twitter.



The Orbital Sciences Corporation Antares rocket launches with the Cygnus spacecraft onboard, Sunday, July 13, 2014, at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. The rocket will carry the Cygnus spacecraft filled with over 3,000 pounds of supplies to the International Space Station in the company's second contracted cargo delivery flight to the space station for NASA. (AP Photo/NASA, Bill Ingalls)



This image released by NASA shows administrator Charles Bolden, right, standing with his wife, Alexis Walker, and other guests as they watch the launch of the Orbital Sciences Corporation Antares rocket, with the Cygnus cargo spacecraft aboard, Sunday, July 13, 2014, at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. Cygnus will deliver over 3,000 pounds of cargo to the Expedition 40 crew at the International Space Station, including science experiments, experiment hardware, spare parts, and crew provisions. Photo Credit: (AP Photo/NASA, Aubrey Gemignani)



This photo provided by NASA, the Orbital Sciences Corporation Antares rocket launches with the Cygnus spacecraft onboard, Sunday, July 13, 2014, at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. The rocket will carry the Cygnus spacecraft filled with over 3,000 pounds of supplies to the International Space Station in the company's second contracted cargo delivery flight to the space station for NASA. (AP Photo/NASA, Bill Ingalls)

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