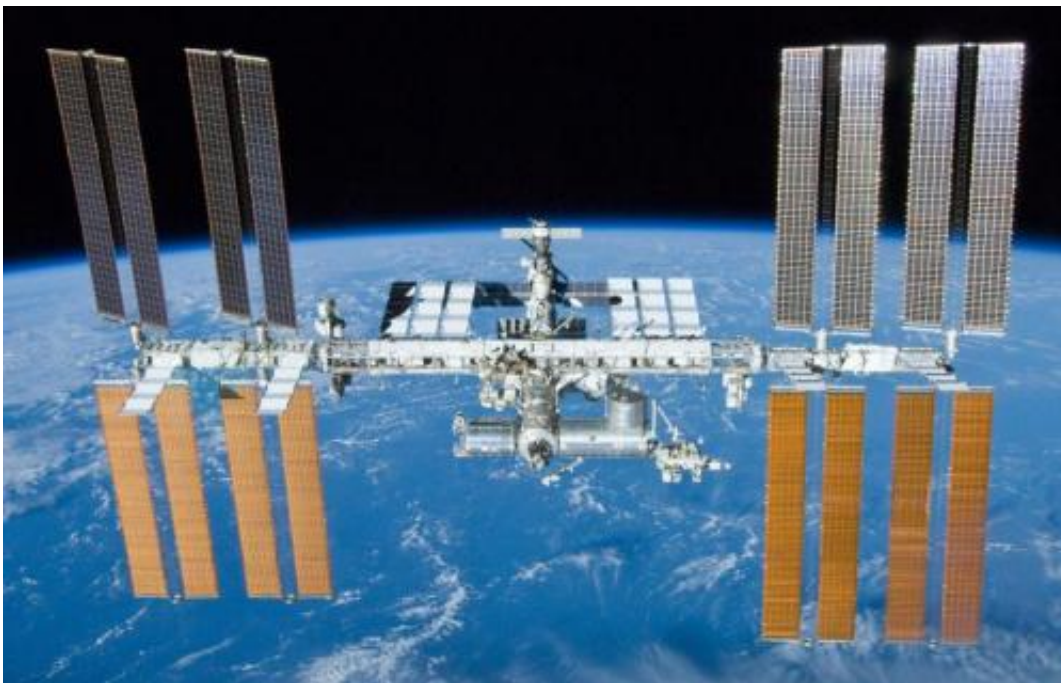


ITAR-TASS claims Russian cosmonauts have found sea plankton on outside of International Space Station

August 21 2014, by Bob Yirka



The International Space Station is featured in this image photographed by an STS-132 crew member on board the Space Shuttle Atlantis after the station and shuttle began their post-undocking relative separation. Credit: NASA/Crew of STS-132

The Russian news agency ITAR-TASS is [claiming](#) that Russian officials have confirmed that Russian cosmonauts have found sea plankton on the outside of the International Space Station. The news agency reports that

the cosmonauts have also found traces of other organisms on the outside of the station as well. To date, no other news group has been able to confirm the report and thus far it appears no other agency, including NASA has been able to confirm the claims made by the Russians.

Finding sea [plankton](#) on the outside of the ISS would be remarkable, as the outside of the station is of course exposed to space—a hostile environment, to say the least. NASA officials reported that they were aware that Russian cosmonauts were conducting experiments on the exterior of the space station (primarily on windows known as illuminators), but were unaware of what they entailed. They note that cosmonauts have conducted such experiments as recently as this past week. The same officials report that they have not heard the results of any findings regarding the experiments from the Russian scientists directly, and thus, cannot comment on what the Russians are claiming. One scientist with NASA, Lynn Rothschild, suggested that if the claims turn out to be true, the plankton likely made its way to the ISS aboard a space station module.

Reports of the sea plankton findings have come, ITAR-TASS reports, from Vladimir Solovyev, chief of the Russian ISS orbital mission—he's also reporting that the type of plankton found is not native to the parts of Russia where spacecraft are launched—he theorizes that air currents could have pushed the plankton to the station (plankton is known to make its way into the atmosphere). The findings, he continues, confirm that organisms can live on the outer surface of the space station, something Russian scientists have apparently been studying for over a year—though he didn't actually come right out and say that the specimens found were still alive. He also reports that the outside of the [space station](#) is covered with material from spacecraft engines that is emitted as they come and go. Of concern are the illuminators, which now need to be polished.

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