

Russia's spinning cargo capsule for space station total loss (Update)

April 29 2015, by Marcia Dunn



In this Feb. 5, 2014 photo provided by NASA, an ISS Progress resupply vehicle approaches the International Space Station. On Wednesday, April 29, 2015, NASA and the Russian Space Agency declared a total loss on an unmanned Progress capsule, carrying 3 tons of goods to the station. The spacecraft began tumbling when it reached orbit Tuesday, following launch from Kazakhstan, and flight controllers were unable to bring it under control. (NASA via AP)

A Russian supply capsule that went into an uncontrollable spin after launch was declared a total loss Wednesday, but astronauts at the

International Space Station said they will get by without the delivery of fresh food, water, clothes and equipment.

"We should be OK," NASA astronaut Scott Kelly assured The Associated Press. "I think we're going to be in good shape."

Kelly and Russian Mikhail Kornienko, the space station's one-year crew members, told the AP during an interview that flight controllers had given up trying to command the cargo carrier. NASA and the Russian Space Agency later confirmed the news.

The unmanned Progress vessel, bearing 3 tons of goods, began tumbling when it reached orbit Tuesday, following launch from Kazakhstan. The head of Roscosmos, Russia's space agency, Igor Komarov, cited a lack of pressure in the main block of the propulsion system in the decision to abort the mission.

Kelly said the craft will fall out of orbit and re-enter the atmosphere. Russian reports indicated a re-entry possibly next week.

The capsule is expected to burn up harmlessly in the atmosphere, as is the case for all Progress carriers, once they have delivered their shipments and are filled with trash.

"The program plans for these kinds of things to happen. They're very unfortunate when they do," said Kelly, one month into a yearlong mission, which will be a record for NASA.



This video screen grab taken from NASA, American astronaut Scott Kelly and Russian cosmonaut Mikhail Kornienko are interviewed at International Space Station on Wednesday, April 29, 2015. Kelly and Kornienko told The Associated Press during the interview, that flight controllers have given up trying to command the cargo carrier. The unmanned vessel began tumbling shortly after its launch Tuesday from Kazakhstan. The cargo ship contains 3 tons of food, water, fuel, clothes and equipment for the six station residents. Kelly says everything and everyone on board should be OK, even without this shipment. But he says it's still unfortunate. Kornienko calls it "a big concern." (NASA via AP)

He added: "The important thing is hardware can be replaced."

Kornienko called it "a big concern." But he expressed "100 percent confidence" that operations will continue as planned until the next shipment arrives.

Supplying the space station is mostly handled by the United States and Russia. NASA hired SpaceX and Orbital Sciences Corp. to provide regular shipments, once the shuttle program ended in 2011.

SpaceX plans to send up a load of supplies in June; its most recent shipment arrived less than two weeks ago.

This is the second cargo ship lost in the past half year.

In October, Orbital Sciences suffered a launch explosion in Virginia that destroyed a station supply ship.

NASA officials want a six-month supply of food on the space station, but because of the Orbital Sciences accident, the reserves are down a month or so. The Japanese Space Agency also periodically sends up cargo; it is aiming for a summer shipment

Six people currently live at the space station: two Americans, one Italian and three Russians.

Just days before Tuesday's launch, Roscosmos announced that the cargo ship held a copy of the Banner of Victory, the red flag with the Soviet hammer and sickle that was raised over the Reichstag in Berlin by victorious Soviet soldiers in 1945. It is a highly revered symbol of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War II.

But on Wednesday, the agency said the banner was already on the space station, arriving with Kelly and Kornienko in March.

Russia is planning extensive celebrations for the 70th anniversary of Victory Day on May 9.

More information: NASA:

www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/main/index.html

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