

Ill-starred Russian space cargo ship to burn up in atmosphere Friday

May 7 2015



The Russian Progress 57 Cargo Ship arriving to dock with the International Space Station on October 29, 2014

Russia said an unmanned supply ship that missed a rendezvous with the International Space Station will burn up on re-entering the Earth's atmosphere after the spacecraft suffered a communications failure.

The Progress supply ship is expected to "end its existence on May 8" between 1:31 am and 4:51 am Moscow time (22:31 GMT Thursday and

01:51 GMT Friday)," the Russian space agency Roscosmos said in a statement.

"The space ship will completely burn up in the layers of the atmosphere and only a few small parts of its construction could reach the surface of our planet," the agency added.

It did not say where the ship was likely to re-enter the Earth's atmosphere. An unnamed space industry source told the state RIA Novosti news agency it could fall into the Indian Ocean.

Roscosmos said the crash would be similar to a planned descent.

Russia sends three or four such spacecraft per year to supply the ISS. After making the delivery they plummet back to Earth, burning up in the atmosphere above the Pacific Ocean.

The spacecraft, a Soviet design generally known for its reliability, blasted off for the ISS on April 28 carrying oxygen, water, spare parts and other supplies for the orbiting space laboratory, which has a crew of six international astronauts.

A few hours after the launch, [mission control](#) lost contact with it.

Russia loses control of its unmanned supply ship

The Progress M-27M cargo spacecraft, which had been due to deliver supplies to the International Space Station (ISS), is spinning out of control and will likely burn up in the atmosphere as it falls to Earth

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| Length: 7.4 m |
| Diameter : 2.7 m |
| Total weight: 7,440 kg |
| Payload: 1,700 kg |



Source: NASA



Factfile on Russia's Progress unmanned spacecraft

A special commission is looking into the incident, the deputy head of Roscosmos, Alexander Ivanov, said.

Sources in the space industry told Russian news agencies that the accident was caused by a problem with the Soyuz rocket carrying the cargo ship into orbit, rather than the supply vessel itself.

A source close to the commission told Interfax news agency on Thursday that the rocket exploded seconds before it and the Progress vessel were due to separate.

Next launch delayed?

The same type of rocket is used for manned ships, meaning any problem with it has to be investigated before further manned launches.

The ISS crew is not in immediate danger of running out of supplies as an American supply ship could bring replenishments by June 19.

But a source in the [space industry](#) told Interfax [news agency](#) on Tuesday that mission control had nonetheless told the crew to conserve resources.

TASS and Interfax news agencies cited sources as saying the next launch of astronauts to the station could be delayed over the glitches.

A spokesman for Roscosmos told TASS that no decision would be taken until the results of the commission of investigation were known.

Three astronauts—one from the European Space Agency, one from NASA and one from Russia—are due to return to Earth next week on May 14.

Their replacements—from Russia, Japan and NASA—are set to blast off to the ISS on May 26.

Russia has recently suffered a series of glitches exposing shortcomings in its [space](#) programme.

A Progress supply ship crashed in Siberia shortly after launch in 2011. Moscow has also lost several lucrative commercial satellites.

Since the mothballing of the US Space Shuttle programme, Moscow has had a monopoly on sending astronauts to the ISS from its Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

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Citation: Ill-starred Russian space cargo ship to burn up in atmosphere Friday (2015, May 7) retrieved 8 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-05-ill-starred-russian-space-cargo->

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