

Soyuz carrying 3-man crew blasts off for orbiting station

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Denmark's astronaut Andreas Mogensen, member of the main crew of the mission to the International Space Station (ISS), gestures near the rocket prior the launch at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015. (Kirill Kudryavtsev/Pool Photo via AP)

A Soyuz spacecraft carrying a Russian, a Dane and a Kazakh blasted off on Wednesday for a two-day trip to the International Space Station.

The rocket lifted off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, a Russian launch facility in Kazakhstan, on schedule at 10:37 a.m. (0437 GMT), with "everything going flawlessly," according to a commentator on NASA television. It was the 500th launch of both manned and unmanned spacecraft from the launch pad used in 1961 by Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, the commentator said.

Andreas Mogensen is the first Dane in space. Russia's Sergei Volkov is following in the footsteps of his father, who 24 years ago launched into space with the first astronaut from Kazakhstan. The Kazakh on the current mission, Aidyn Aimbetov, got his seat when British singer Sarah Brightman pulled out.

The new three-man crew will arrive at the orbiting outpost on Friday after a two-day flight through space. For the past two years, the crews have taken a more direct, six-hour flight, but the Russian Federal Space Agency decided last week to revert to the traditional route, citing security concerns after the International Space Station had to adjust its orbit to dodge space junk.

The arrival of Volkov, Aimbetov and Mogensen will bring the number on board the station to nine for the first time since November 2013. The Kazakh and Dane are scheduled to return to Earth on Sept. 12 with Russian Gennady Padalka, the current station commander.

Command will then be passed to NASA's Scott Kelly, who along with Mikhail Kornienko of Russia is spending a full year on the station to study the effects of long space travel in preparation for a possible future trip to Mars.



The Soyuz-FG rocket booster with Soyuz TMA-18M space ship carrying a new crew to the International Space Station, ISS, blasts off at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015. The Russian rocket carries Kazakhstan's cosmonaut Aydyn Aimbetov, Russian cosmonaut Sergei Volkov and Denmark's astronaut Andreas Mogensen. (AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky)



Kazakhstan's cosmonaut Aydyn Aimbetov, center, Russian cosmonaut Sergei Volkov, bottom, and Denmark's astronaut Andreas Mogensen, members of the main crew of the mission to the International Space Station (ISS), gesture near the rocket prior the launch at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015. (Kirill Kudryavtsev/Pool Photo via AP)



Kazakhstan's cosmonaut Aydyn Aimbetov, member of the main crew of the mission to the International Space Station (ISS), gestures near the rocket prior the launch at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015. (Kirill Kudryavtsev/Pool Photo via AP)



Russian cosmonaut Sergei Volkov, member of the main crew of the mission to the International Space Station (ISS), gestures near to the rocket prior the launch at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015. (Kirill Kudryavtsev/Pool Photo via AP)



Denmark's astronaut Andreas Mogensen, member of the main crew of the mission to the International Space Station (ISS), waves to his relatives from a bus prior the launch of Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015. (AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky, Pool)



Kazakhstan's cosmonaut Aydyn Aimbetov, left, Russian cosmonaut Sergei Volkov, center, and Denmark's astronaut Andreas Mogensen, members of the main crew of the expedition to the International Space Station (ISS), walk prior the launch of Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015. (AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky, Pool)



Denmark's astronaut Andreas Mogensen, member of the main crew of the expedition to the International Space Station (ISS), inspects his space suit prior the launch of Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015. (AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky,)

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