

Rocket carrying crew of 3 blasts off for Int'l Space Station

November 17 2016



The Soyuz-FG rocket booster with Soyuz MS-03 space ship carrying a new crew to the International Space Station, ISS, blasts off at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Friday, Nov. 18, 2016. The Russian rocket carries French astronaut Thomas Pesquet, Russian cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky and U.S. astronaut Peggy Whitson. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky)

A Soyuz rocket carrying a veteran American astronaut, a French newcomer and a Russian cosmonaut blasted off for the International

Space Station on Friday.

The crew of NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson, Russia's Oleg Novitskiy and France's Thomas Pesquet lifted off from the Russia-leased launch facility in Kazakhstan at 2:20 a.m. Friday (2020 GMT, 3:20 p.m. EST Thursday) and went into orbit eight minutes later. The crew will now travel for two days before docking at the space station.

Whitson, who will celebrate her 57th birthday in February, has now become the oldest woman in space, adding to her long list of barrier-breaking records. This will be the third space station mission for Whitson, an Iowa-born biochemist, and her second stint as commander. She already has spent 377 days in space and performed multiple spacewalks. This six-month mission should push her beyond 534 days in space, the U.S. record set in September by 58-year-old astronaut Jeffrey Williams.

Whitson, Novitskiy, 45, and the 38-year-old Pesquet, who is making his maiden flight into space, will join an American and two Russians at the orbiting lab. They have worked at the station since October.



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U.S. astronaut Peggy Whitson, member of the main crew of the expedition to the International Space Station (ISS), gestures from a bus prior the launch of Soyuz MS-3 space ship at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, Nov. 17, 2016. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky, Pool)



Russian cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky, bottom, and U.S. astronaut Peggy Whitson, crew members of the mission to the International Space Station, ISS, wave near the rocket prior the launch of Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, Nov. 17, 2016. (AP Photo/Shamil Zhumatov, Pool)



French astronaut Thomas Pesquet, above, Russian cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky, bottom, and U.S. astronaut Peggy Whitson, crew members of the mission to the International Space Station, ISS, wave near the rocket prior the launch of Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, Nov. 17, 2016. (AP Photo/Shamil Zhumatov, Pool)



Russian cosmonaut Oleg Novitskiy, member of the main crew of the expedition to the International Space Station (ISS), gestures from a bus prior the launch of Soyuz MS-3 space ship at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, Nov. 17, 2016. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky, Pool)



French astronaut Thomas Pesquet member of the main crew of the expedition to the International Space Station (ISS), gestures prior the launch of Soyuz MS-03 space ship at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, Nov. 17, 2016. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky)



The Soyuz-FG rocket booster with Soyuz MS-03 space ship carrying a new crew to the International Space Station, ISS, flies in the sky at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Friday, Nov. 18, 2016. The Russian rocket carries French astronaut Thomas Pesquet, Russian cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky and U.S. astronaut Peggy Whitson. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky)



In this photo taken with long time exposure the Soyuz-FG rocket booster with Soyuz MS-03 space ship carrying a new crew to the International Space Station, ISS, blasts off at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Friday, Nov. 18, 2016. The Russian rocket carries French astronaut Thomas Pesquet, Russian cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky and U.S. astronaut Peggy Whitson. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky)

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