

Russia launches cargo spacecraft after aborted liftoff (Update)

February 13 2018

Russia on Tuesday launched an unmanned Progress cargo ship to the International Space Station after a glitch led officials to postpone the planned liftoff two days earlier.

The Soyuz rocket carrying the Progress ship took off from the snow-covered Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan at 11:15 am Moscow time (0815 GMT) and reached its designated orbit several minutes later, the Russian space agency said.

"We have liftoff!" the Roscosmos space agency tweeted.

The cargo ship is carrying dry cargo, fuel, water, oxygen and air to the crew of the ISS.

It is also carrying equipment for the experimental ICARUS project, an animal tracking system that will be installed on the outer surface of the station.

The launch of the Progress was initially scheduled for Sunday but was postponed at the last minute until Tuesday due to an unspecified problem.

Space industry sources told Russian news agencies Monday that the onboard computer of the Soyuz rocket had to be replaced.

Reasons for the aborted launch were being investigated.

The Sunday launch was supposed to take the Progress to the International Space Station in a record time of just over three hours for the first time by using a new scheme to dock with the ISS after taking just two orbits around the Earth.

However Russia on Tuesday had to opt for the old, two-day rendezvous due to orbital mechanics, with the docking expected to take place Thursday afternoon.

Six men are currently at the International Space Station including Russian cosmonauts Anton Shkaplerov and Alexander Misurkin and NASA astronauts Joe Acaba, Mark Vande Hei and Scott Tingle.

Russia's once-proud space industry has suffered a series of setbacks over recent years, with officials losing a number of satellites and other spacecraft.

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