

# Cosmonaut, two US astronauts return to Earth from ISS

February 28 2018, by Alexander Nemenov

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The Soyuz MS-06 space capsule carrying the ISS crew descends for its landing in a remote area of Kazakhstan

Two NASA astronauts and a Russian cosmonaut returned to Earth on Wednesday, rounding off a mission of more than five months aboard the

International Space Station.

Alexander Misurkin of Russia's Roscosmos [space](#) agency and NASA's Mark Vande Hei and Joe Acaba touched down on steppe land southeast of the town of Dzhezkazgan in central Kazakhstan at the expected time of 0231 GMT.

"All descent and landing operations went according to plan. The crew members that have returned to Earth are feeling well," Roscosmos said in a statement.

Misurkin, 40, who handed over command of the International Space Station to compatriot Anton Shkaplerov Tuesday and took charge of the Soyuz descent module carrying the trio down to Earth has spent 334 days in space over two flights.

He was in buoyant mood on the way down, telling Russian Mission control he felt "better than anyone", and was the first crew member to emerge out of the spacecraft onto the snow-covered steppe.

Following him out of the craft that landed upright were Acaba, 50, who has now racked up some 10 months in orbit over three missions and his 51-year-old colleague Vande Hei, who was in space for the first time.

Both NASA astronauts were active on Twitter while aboard the ISS, while Misurkin eschewed the micro-blogging platform.



NASA astronaut Joe Acaba is helped out of the Soyuz MS-06 space capsule

Puerto Rican native Acaba on Sunday tweeted a photo of his hands framing the Earth as viewed from the ISS's famous "Cupola" observation module.

"The future of our home is in all of our hands. May we all care for #Earth and practice good stewardship," he wrote.

Ex-military man Vande Hei took to the micro-blogging platform to share his love of sports, taking in both the American football Superbowl and the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics while aboard the orbital lab.

Both NASA men will board a plane from Kazakhstan to Houston to continue post-mission testing while Misurkin is bound for Star City, just outside Moscow.

Remaining ISS crew members Shkaplerov of Roscosmos, Scott Tingle of NASA and Norishige Kanai of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency are set to be joined by Americans Ricky Arnold and Andrew Feustel and Russian Oleg Artemyev following a launch from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan later this month.

NASA stopped its own manned launches to the ISS in 2011 but recently moved to increase its crew complement aboard the ISS as the Russians cut theirs in a cost-saving measure.

Roscosmos will replenish its crew once a new, multi-purpose space module called Nauka docks at the ISS, but the launch of the module has been delayed several times and is now not expected to take place before 2019.

The ISS laboratory, a rare example of American and Russian international cooperation, has been orbiting Earth at about 28,000 kilometres per hour (17,000 miles per hour) since 1998.

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