

First Arab set for ISS says voyage will make 'history'

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The Emirati astronaut who will make history by becoming the first Arab on the International Space Station said Tuesday he had received support from around the world before his "dream" mission.

Hazzaa al-Mansoori, 35, is set to blast into space accompanied by Russia's Oleg Skripochka and NASA astronaut Jessica Meir onboard a Soyuz rocket from Baikonur in Kazakhstan on Wednesday.

Mansoori, who will spend eight days on the ISS, will be the first Emirati astronaut and the first Arab on the orbiting laboratory, but not the first Muslim.

"It is really an honour and we are looking forward to make this mission successful and to come back with a lot of knowledge," the pilot told a pre-flight news conference.

He said the trip was a milestone for his country and the Arab world.

"This achievement will be in history and it will be continued," he said. "The dream has come true."

Mansoori said that he would record his prayer routine on the ISS and broadcast it to people on Earth.

"As a fighter pilot I already prayed in my aircraft," he said, explaining that he had experience of prayers at high speed.

Mansoori also plans to conduct experiments and said he would take Emirati food with him to share with the crew.

Skripochka, first-time flyer Meir and Mansoori will join a six-member crew on the ISS and for a brief period of time the ISS will be home to nine [astronauts](#).

Meir, 42, said it was "quite an achievement" for the United Arab Emirates to have a man in space, given that its programme is so new.

She said the crew communicated by using "Runglish"—a mixture of Russian and English.

"We still need to work on our Arabic," she joked.

Mansoori is set to return to Earth with NASA's Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin on October 3. Skripochka and Meir are set to remain on the ISS until the spring of 2020.

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