

SpaceX capsule with crew of four docks with ISS

November 12 2021



SpaceX Crew-3 astronauts (L-R) Matthias Maurer, Thomas Marshburn, Raja Chari and Kayla Barron during training.

A SpaceX capsule carrying four astronauts docked with the International Space Station on Thursday, kicking off a six-month stay on the orbiting outpost.

This mission known as Crew-3 is part of NASA's multibillion-dollar partnership with Elon Musk's space company, signed after the Space Shuttle program ended in 2011 and aimed at restoring US capacity to carry out human spaceflight, rather than depend on Russia for links to the ISS.

The ISS had been operating with just one NASA astronaut in the US segment to welcome the incoming crew, after the astronauts of the earlier Crew-2 mission splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico on Sunday.

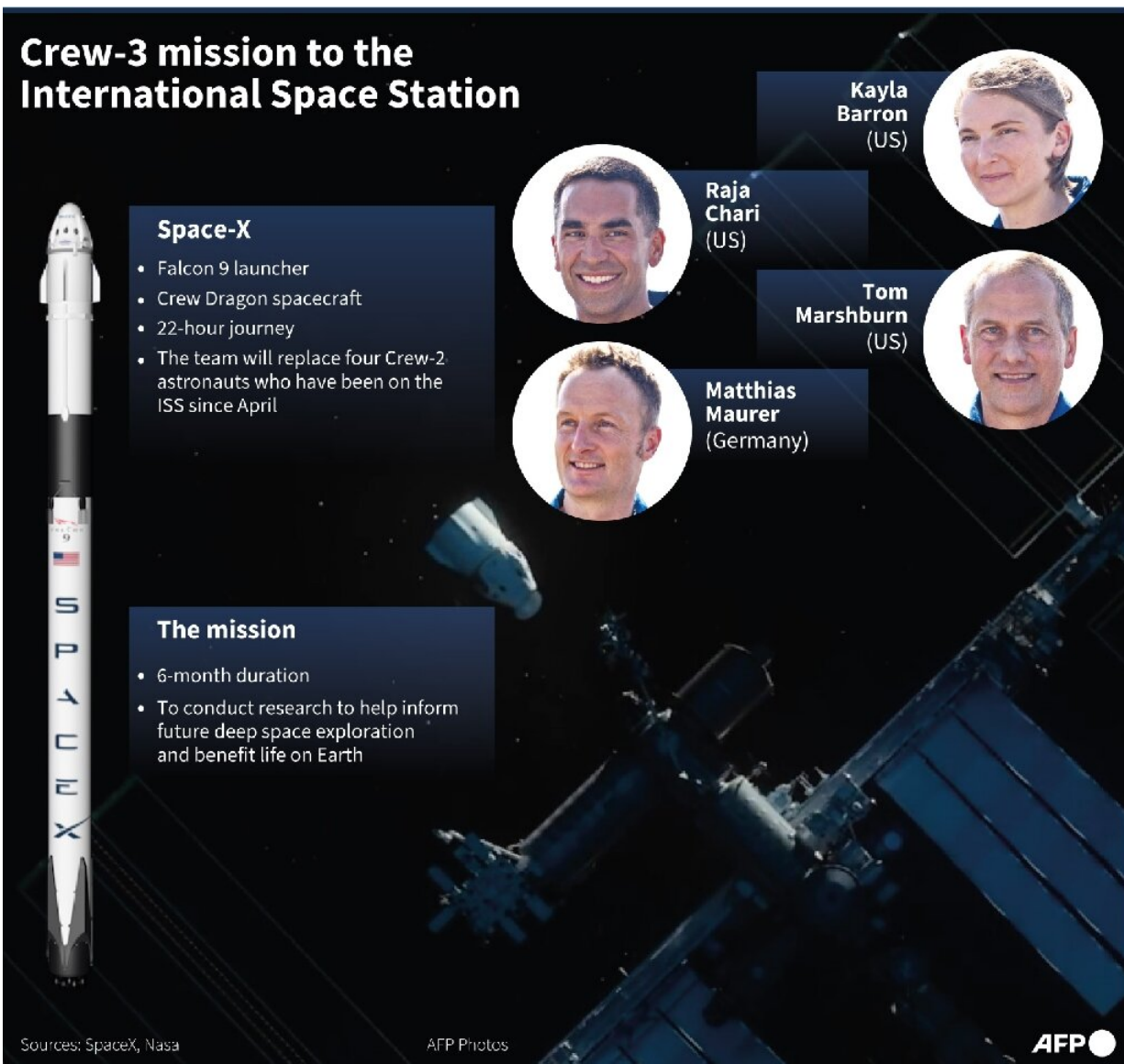
Crew-3's Raja Chari, Kayla Barron and Tom Marshburn of the United States and Matthias Maurer of Germany traveled to space aboard a Crew Dragon capsule fixed to a Falcon 9 rocket from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. They blasted off late Wednesday.

The spaceship, called Endurance, docked with the ISS around 7:10 pm Thursday (0010 GMT Friday).

The flight was initially postponed from October 31, first for weather, then a "minor medical issue" affecting one of the crew. NASA did not say who it was but said it was not Covid-related.

Chari, a US Air Force colonel, is commanding the mission and making his first trip to space, along with Barron and Maurer.

Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station



Space-X

- Falcon 9 launcher
- Crew Dragon spacecraft
- 22-hour journey
- The team will replace four Crew-2 astronauts who have been on the ISS since April

The mission

- 6-month duration
- To conduct research to help inform future deep space exploration and benefit life on Earth

Kayla Barron
(US)

Raja Chari
(US)

Tom Marshburn
(US)

Matthias Maurer
(Germany)

Sources: SpaceX, NASA

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Graphic on the SpaceX's Crew-3 mission to send four astronauts to the International Space Station.

Marshburn, a medical doctor, flew aboard a Space Shuttle in 2009 and a Russian Soyuz spacecraft in a mission from 2012-13.

Barron, who along with Chari was selected for the NASA astronaut

corps in 2017, the most recent recruitment, previously served as a submarine warfare officer for the Navy, while Maurer, a materials science engineer, is the 12th German to go into space.

The quartet will spend six months on the orbital outpost and conduct research to help inform future deep space exploration and benefit life on Earth.

Scientific highlights of the mission include an experiment to grow plants in space without soil or other growth media, and another to build optical fibers in microgravity, which prior research has suggested will be superior in quality to those made on Earth.

The Crew-3 astronauts will also conduct spacewalks to complete an upgrade of the station's solar panels and will be present for two tourism missions, including Japanese visitors aboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft at the end of the year and the Space-X Axiom crew, set for launch in February 2022.

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