

Space station gets 3 new residents after Russian launch

September 21 2022, by MARCIA DUNN



The Soyuz-2.1a rocket booster with Soyuz MS-22 space ship carrying a new crew to the International Space Station, ISS, blasts off at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2022. The Russian rocket carries NASA astronaut Frank Rubio, Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitri Petelin. Credit: AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky

The International Space Station welcomed three new residents Wednesday following a smooth Russian launch.

The Soyuz capsule rocketed into orbit from Kazakhstan and, just three hours later, pulled up at the space station. American Frank Rubio checked in for a six-month stay along with Russians Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitri Petelin.

Rubio, a doctor and former Army parachutist from Miami, rode up on the Soyuz under a new crew swap agreement between the two countries. [The agreement was finalized in July](#) despite tensions over Moscow's war in Ukraine, a sign of continuing Russia-U.S. cooperation in space.

Under this cash-free barter, Russian cosmonaut Anna Kikina will fly SpaceX to the space station from Florida in less than two weeks. NASA and the Russian Space Agency want to keep exchanging seats like this to ensure a constant U.S. and Russian presence at the space station.

NASA astronauts routinely launched on Russian Soyuz rockets—for tens of millions of dollars apiece—until SpaceX started flying station crews from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in 2020. A Russian last launched from Florida 20 years ago.

SpaceX aims to launch Kikina along with one Japanese and two Americans as early as Oct. 3.



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In this photo taken with long time exposure the Soyuz-2.1a rocket booster with Soyuz MS-22 space ship carrying a new crew to the International Space Station (ISS), blasts off at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2022. The Russian rocket carries NASA astronaut Frank Rubio, Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitri Petelin. Credit: AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky



NASA astronaut Frank Rubio, crew member of the mission to the International Space Station (ISS), waves as he boards the spaceship prior the launch at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky, Pool



From left: NASA astronaut Frank Rubio, Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitri Petelin, crew members of the mission to the International Space Station (ISS), walk to the rocket prior the launch of Soyuz-2.1 rocket, at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky, Pool



NASA astronaut Frank Rubio, right, Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev, center, and Dmitri Petelin, members of the main crew to the International Space Station (ISS), greet their relatives and friends in front of a bus prior the launch of Soyuz-2.1 rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky



NASA astronaut Frank Rubio, centre, Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev, bottom, and Dmitri Petelin, crew members of the mission to the International Space Station (ISS) wave as they board the spaceship prior the launch at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky, Pool



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The new arrivals will replace astronauts living up there since early spring; the crew size eventually will settle back to seven.

Italian astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti said the view of the launch from the space station was "spectacular." [She tweeted stunning photos](#) of the glowing limb of the Earth and the rocket's zigzagging white contrail.

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