

# SpaceX crew launch to ISS postponed

February 27 2023, by Gianrigo MARLETTA

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A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket on the launch pad at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

A rocket launch to the International Space Station was postponed minutes before take-off on Monday, with officials citing a problem with ground systems.

The SpaceX Dragon Crew-6 mission was scheduled to depart the Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 1:45 am (0645 GMT), carrying two

NASA astronauts, a Russian cosmonaut and the second Emirati to voyage to space.

But just two minutes before lift-off, the launch was called off, or "scrubbed".

"Today's #Crew6 launch has been scrubbed due to an issue with ground systems," NASA posted on Twitter.

SpaceX unloaded fuel from its Falcon 9 rocket and the crew disembarked, NASA added in a statement.

"The next available launch attempt is at 12:34 a.m. EST Thursday, March 2, pending resolution of the technical issue preventing Monday's launch," it said.

"I'm proud of the NASA and SpaceX teams' focus and dedication to keeping Crew-6 safe," NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said in the statement.

"Human spaceflight is an inherently risky endeavor and, as always, we will fly when we are ready."

Once they are successfully sent into space, NASA's Stephen Bowen and Warren Hoburg, Russia's Andrey Fedyaev and Sultan al-Neyadi of the United Arab Emirates are to spend six months on the orbiting station.



The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket with the company's Crew Dragon spacecraft readies for the Crew-6 mission bound for the International Space Station.

Neyadi, 41, will be the fourth astronaut from an Arab country and the second from the oil-rich UAE to journey to space; his compatriot Hazzaa al-Mansoori flew an eight-day mission in 2019.

Neyadi described the upcoming mission as a "great honor."

Hoburg, the Endeavour pilot, and Fedyaev, the Russian mission specialist, will also be making their first space flights.

Fedyaev is the second Russian cosmonaut to fly to the ISS aboard a SpaceX rocket. NASA astronauts fly regularly to the station on Russian Soyuz craft.

Space has remained a rare venue of cooperation between Moscow and Washington since the Russian offensive in Ukraine placed the two in sharp opposition.

Bowen, a veteran of three space shuttle missions, said politics rarely come up while in space.

"We're all professionals. We keep focused on the mission itself," the commander said. "It's always been a great relationship we've had with cosmonauts once we get to space."

While aboard the ISS, the Crew-6 members will conduct dozens of experiments including studying how materials burn in microgravity and



researching heart, brain and cartilage functions.

The current crew is the sixth to be transported by a SpaceX rocket to the ISS. The Endeavour capsule has flown into space three times.



Russian cosmonaut Andrey Fedyaev sits next to a photo of the patch bearing the names of the four members of SpaceX Dragon Crew-6 mission.

NASA pays SpaceX to ferry astronauts to the ISS roughly every six months.

The space agency expects Crew-6 to have a handover of several days with the four members of Crew-5, who have been on the ISS since

October. Crew-5 will then return to Earth.

## **Rescue capsule**

Also aboard the ISS are cosmonauts Dmitry Petelin and Sergei Prokopyev, as well as NASA astronaut Frank Rubio.

They had been scheduled to return home on March 28 but the cooling system of their Soyuz MS-22 capsule was damaged by a tiny meteoroid in December while docked with the ISS.

An uncrewed Russian Soyuz capsule, MS-23, took off on Friday from Kazakhstan to bring the three astronauts home. They are now scheduled to return to Earth in September.

Construction of the ISS began in 1998 at a time of increased US-Russia cooperation following the Cold War space race.

Russia has been using the aging but reliable Soyuz capsules to ferry astronauts into space since the 1960s.

But in recent years, Russia's space program has been beset by a litany of problems that have led to the loss of satellites and vehicles.

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