

Soyuz space capsule carrying American, Russian blasts off

20 April 2017



The Soyuz-FG rocket booster with Soyuz MS-04 spacecraft carrying a new crew to the International Space Station, ISS, blasts off at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, April 20, 2017. The Russian rocket carries U.S. astronaut Jack Fischer and Russian cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky)

A Soyuz space capsule blasted off Thursday for the International Space Station, carrying an American astronaut making his first space flight and a veteran Russian cosmonaut.

NASA's Jack Fischer and Russia's Fyodor Yurchikhin lifted off from the Russia-leased launch facility in Kazakhstan at 1:13 p.m. (0713GMT, 3:13 a.m. EDT). They reached orbit about nine minutes later, a moment illustrated when a small white stuffed dog hanging from a string in the capsule began to float.

They will travel six hours before docking at the space station.

Fischer and Yurchikhin will join NASA's Peggy Whitson, Russia's Oleg Novitskiy and France's

Thomas Pesquet.

The two American astronauts are scheduled to speak with President Donald Trump on Monday. On that day, Whitson, the first woman to command the International Space Station, will have spent 535 days in space, more time than any other American astronaut. Jeffrey Williams currently holds the record.

At 57, Whitson also is the oldest woman in space. She returns to Earth in September.

Fischer and Yurchikhin, making his fifth space flight, will spend more than four months aboard the orbiting station before also returning to Earth in September.



U.S. astronaut Jack Fischer, above, and Russian cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin, crew members of the mission to the International Space Station, ISS, wave near the rocket prior the launch of Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, April 20, 2017. (AP Photo/Kirill Kudryavtsev, Pool)



Russian cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin, member of the main crew to the International Space Station (ISS), gestures to his relatives from a bus prior the launch of Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, April 20, 2017. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky)

U.S. astronaut Jack Fischer, crew member of the mission to the International Space Station, ISS, waves near the rocket prior to the launch of the Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, April 20, 2017. (AP Photo/Kirill Kudryavtsev, Pool)



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APA citation: Soyuz space capsule carrying American, Russian blasts off (2017, April 20) retrieved 25 September 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-04-russian-american-two-man-crew-blasts.html>

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