

American, Russian cheered as they reach Intl Space Station

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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 on Thursday safely delivered an American astronaut making his first space flight and a veteran Russian cosmonaut to the International Space Station.

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

About six hours later, they docked at the orbiting outpost.

NASA's Peggy Whitson, the crew's commander, Russia's Oleg Novitskiy and France's Thomas

Pesquet greeted Fischer and Yurchikhin with cheers and hugs. They floated into the station two hours after the docking.

Yurchikhin, making his fifth space flight, and Fischer, who is there for the first time, talked to family and friends at the Baikonur facility who were watching the launch there.

Fischer's wife thanked him for what she said was "the most unexpected bouquet of flowers" that she received as he was launching into space. Fischer told his wife she had veteran cosmonaut Yurchikhin to thank for that.

"I learnt from the master. Fyodor told me I should be doing that," he said.



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)

The two American astronauts are scheduled to

speaking with President Donald Trump on Monday. On that day, Whitson, who on a previous mission became the first woman to command the International Space Station, will break the U.S. astronaut record for the most cumulative time in space. Jeffrey Williams currently holds the 534-day record.

At 57, Whitson also is the oldest woman to have been in space. She is scheduled to return to Earth in September.

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



Russian cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin, crew member of the mission to the International Space Station, ISS, waves 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)



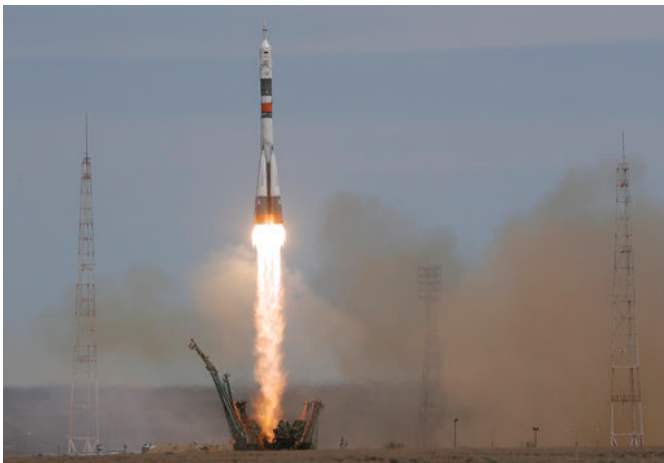
Russian cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin, member of the main crew to the International Space Station (ISS), gestures to his relatives from a bus prior the launch of Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Thursday, April 20, 2017. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky)



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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