

Astronauts optimistic for ISS launch after botched flight

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NASA astronauts Christina Hammock Koch and Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin are set to blast off for the ISS on March 14

Russian cosmonaut Aleksey Ovchinin and US astronaut Nick Hague said Thursday they were ready to head into space again next month after their last launch ended in failure.

The two men previously took off in a Soyuz rocket for the International Space Station in October, but an accident minutes after blast-off sent them plunging back to Earth—a very rare event for manned flights.

"I think that this time everything will work out well," said Ovchinin, who commanded the Soyuz in October when the emergency landing system was activated.

Communication was cut with the spacecraft and observers of the live feed held their breath as it hurtled to Earth but the two-man crew was eventually rescued by Russian emergency services in Kazakhstan.

At a pre-flight press conference outside Moscow,

Ovchinin said both [astronauts](#) met with psychologists following the failed flight.

"They were satisfied that we are okay," he said.

Hague, who has not been to the ISS before, said there were no "lingering effects" from the incident and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be slotted back into the schedule.

"I know it was not an easy task to put us back into the launch sequence," he said.

Hague and Ovchinin will be joined by US astronaut Christina Hammock Koch on her first flight, planned for March 14.

In September this year, the [space station](#) will be unusually crowded with three different [space](#) crews and a total of nine people, said Ovchinin, who previously logged over five months in space in 2016.

"I don't have that kind of experience," he said. "Of course it will probably be more cramped, but more people means we'll have more fun, and it's always nice to see new faces."

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