Beat: Technology

Soyuz spacecraft blasts off for International Space Station

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USPA News - A Russian Soyuz spacecraft launched from a facility in the desert steppe of Kazakhstan on early Wednesday morning to carry three new members of Expedition 36 to the International Space Station (ISS). They will join three other astronauts who arrived earlier this year.

The Soyuz TMA-09M blasted off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan at 2:31 a.m. local time on Wednesday, or 2031GMT on Tuesday. The spacecraft orbited the Earth four times before it docked at the station at 8:10 a.m. Kazakshtan time or 0210GMT on Wednesday, less than six hours after launch. The spacecraft was carrying American NASA astronaut Karen Nyberg, Russian cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin and Italian astronaut Luca Parmitano of the European Space Agency. They will join NASA astronaut Chris Cassidy and Russian cosmonauts Alexander Misurkin and Pavel Vinogradov who arrived at the orbiting laboratory in March. The six crew members will comprise Expedition 36 for the next several months, and the crew is expecting an especially busy schedule this summer. The group will welcome the arrival of the European Automated Transfer Vehicle-4 cargo spacecraft in June, followed at the end of the month by a spacewalk by Yurchikhin and Misurkin. Cassidy and Parmitano will perform two spacewalks in July, followed soon afterward by the arrival of a Russian cargo ship. A Japanese HTV cargo spacecraft will also deliver supplies to the space station later this summer, followed by two more spacewalks by Yurchikhin and Misurkin. Expedition 36 also will add several key investigations to more than 1,600 experiments that have taken place so far aboard the station. The crew will examine ways to maintain bone health, yielding important information about how the human body adapts to space and improving understanding of osteoporosis and its countermeasures. The crew will also continue research into how plants grow, leading to more efficient crops on Earth and improving understanding of how future crews could grow their own food in space. The crew also will test a new portable gas monitor designed to help analyze the environment inside the spacecraft and continue fuel and combustion experiments that past crews have undertaken.

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