

Beat: News

International Space Station Astronauts Land Safely In Kazakhstan

Three members of the Expedition 33 crew

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USPA NEWS - Astronauts returned safely to Earth Sunday, wrapping up a mission lasting more than four months. Expedition 33 Commander Sunita Williams of NASA, Flight Engineer Akihiko Hoshide of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency and Russian Soyuz Commander Yuri Malenchenko undocked their Soyuz.

The trio arrived at the station July 17 and spent 127 days in space, 125 of which were aboard the orbiting laboratory. This was the first pre-dawn landing in darkness for a station crew since April 9, 2006, when Expedition 12 crew members returned.

NASA astronaut Kevin Ford took command of the space station on Nov. 18. When the Soyuz spacecraft undocked from the space station, Expedition 34 began. Ford and his crewmates, Russian cosmonauts Oleg Novitskiy and Evgeny Tarelkin, will tend to the station as a three-man crew for one month until the arrival of three new crew members, including NASA astronaut Tom Marshburn.

Expedition 33 advanced the scope of research aboard the station by conducting a wide range of physical science, Earth observation and technology demonstration investigations. Research included testing radiation levels on the orbiting outpost, assessing how microgravity affects the spinal cord, and investigating dynamic processes on Earth, such as melting glaciers, seasonal changes and human impacts on the ecosystem.

Williams, Hoshide and Malenchenko orbited Earth 2,032 times and traveled 54,090,628 miles. Williams, who has spent 322 days in space on two missions, now ranks sixth on the all-time U.S. endurance list, and second all-time for a female. Malenchenko has spent 642 days in space on his five flights, which ranks him seventh on the all-time endurance list. During their mission, Williams and Hoshide performed three spacewalks to replace a component that relays power from the space station's solar arrays to its systems and repair an ammonia leak on a station radiator. With 50 hours and 40 minutes, Williams holds the record for total cumulative spacewalk time by a female astronaut. Hoshide holds the male record for total cumulative spacewalks.

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