



NASA astronaut T.J. Creamer, Expedition 23 flight engineer, is carried in a chair to the medical tent just minutes after he and fellow crew members Russian cosmonaut Oleg Kotov and Japanese astronaut Soichi Noguchi landed in their Soyuz TMA-17 capsule near the town of Zhezkazgan, Kazakhstan, on June 2, 2010. Creamer, Kotov and Noguchi are returning from six months onboard the International Space Station where they served as members of the Expedition 22 and 23 crews.



The Russian Soyuz spacecraft carrying three new Expedition 24 flight engineers bound for the International Space Station prepared for lift off earlier this week near the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.



U.S. Army COL Doug Wheelock, Russian cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin, and NASA Astronaut Shannon Walker prepare for their mission before Tuesday's launch of the three new Expedition 24 crew members. *Photos courtesy NASA*

Army Astronaut Launches as part of **EXPEDITION 24**

By NASA

The Russian Soyuz spacecraft carrying three new Expedition 24 flight engineers bound for the International Space Station lifted off at 5:35 p.m. EDT Tuesday.

As the launch of the Soyuz TMA-19 lit up the pre-dawn skies around the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, NASA astronauts Doug Wheelock and Shannon Walker and Russian cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin began the two-day journey to catch up with the space station currently orbiting 220 statute miles above the Earth.

The station's newest flight engineers will begin a five-and-a-half month tour of duty after docking with the station's Zvezda service module at 6:25 p.m. Thursday. Fellow Expedition 24 crewmates Commander Alexander Skvortsov and Flight Engineers Mikhail Kornienko and Tracy Caldwell Dyson will welcome them aboard the orbiting complex when the hatches open around 10 p.m.

In September Wheelock, Walker and Yurchikhin will become the Expedition 25 crew when Skvortsov, Kornienko and Caldwell Dyson return home in the Soyuz TMA-18 spacecraft that brought them to the station April 4.

U.S. Army COL Wheelock, 50, is making his second trip into space. As an STS-120 mission specialist aboard space shuttle Discovery in 2007, he traveled to the station and conducted three spacewalks. Walker, 45, is a graduate of Rice University and the first native Houstonian to be named an astronaut. This is her first spaceflight. Yurchikhin, 51, is making his third trip into space and his second long-duration stay aboard the station. He flew aboard space shuttle Atlantis on the STS-112 mission to the station in October 2002. He also spent six months aboard the station in 2007 as commander of Expedition 15.