EXPEDITION 15 EXPANDING THE ISS FOR SCIENCE

Two Russian cosmonauts joined an American astronaut aboard the International Space Station on April 9, 2007, marking the beginning of Expedition 15, one of the most complex missions since permanent occupancy of the complex began almost seven years ago.

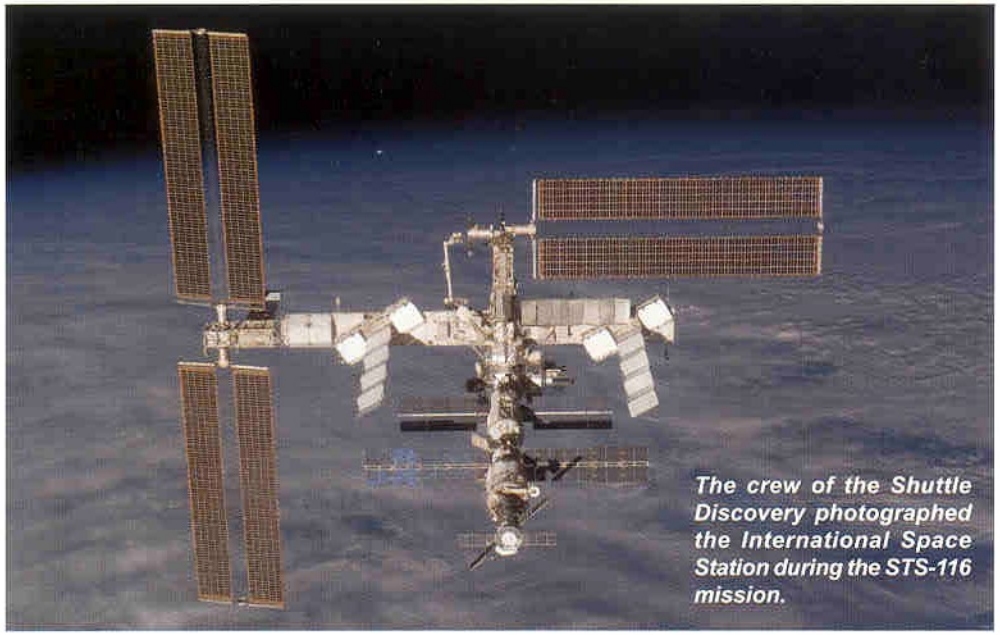
Expedition 15 will welcome two visiting Space Shuttle crews who will continue construction of the ISS. During the STS-117 mission, Atlantis will deliver two starboard truss segments and a new set of solar arrays to the Station. The subsequent Shuttle mission, Endeavour's STS-118 flight, will bring the fifth and final truss segment to the Station, and the crew will replace a failed gyroscope.

Other Expedition 15 tasks include using the Canadarm 2 robotic arm to move one of the Station's docking ports, the Pressurized Mating Adapter-3, clearing the port side for the temporary installation of Harmony (Node 2) during the STS-120 mission targeted for later this year.

On April 7, 2007, Soyuz TMA-10 was launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan with Russian Cosmonaut Fyodor Yurchikhin, the Expedition 15 Commander, and fellow Cosmonaut Oleg Kotov serving as flight engineer and Soyuz commander. Traveling with them was space flight participant Charles Simonyi, an American businessman who is a former executive with Microsoft Corp., visiting the Station under a contract with the Russian Federal Space Agency.

Rounding out the Expedition 15 crew is NASA Astronaut Sunita Williams, who flew to the Station on the Shuttle Discovery's STS-116 mission in December 2006.

Yurchikhin and Kotov spent more than a week with their predecessors, the Expedition 14 crew of Michael Lopez-Alegria and Mikhail Tyurin who have been aboard the Station since September 2006. After ten days in space, Simonyi returned to Earth on the Expedition 14's Soyuz with Lopez-Alegria and Tyurin.



The crew of the Shuttle Discovery photographed the International Space Station during the STS-116 mission.

Plans call for Yurchikhin and Kotov to be joined by NASA astronaut Clayton Anderson when he makes his first flight into space aboard the Shuttle Atlantis on STS-117. Anderson will replace Williams as the third expedition crewmember on the Station.

Anderson will return to Earth aboard Shuttle Discovery as part of STS-120. That flight will carry Expedition 16 crewmember and NASA Astronaut Daniel Tani. He will return home aboard Atlantis on mission STS-122.

Yurchikhin and Kotov's stay aboard the Station is expected to last approximately six months, at which time the Expedition 16 crew replaces them in the fall of 2007.

Oleg Kotov (foreground) and Sunita Williams participate in a Remote Manipulator System training session using a robotic simulator aboard the International Space Station.

CREW PROFILE

Fyodor Yurchikhin

Fyodor Yurchikhin, Ph.D.
Expedition 15 Commander
Born: January 3, 1959, in Batumi, Autonomous Republic of Ajara in Georgia
Education: Graduated from the Moscow Service State University with a doctorate in economics. He is also qualified as a mechanical engineer.
Experience: Selected as a cosmonaut in 1997, he previously flew on the STS-112 mission that delivered a truss segment to the ISS.

Oleg Kotov

Oleg Kotov, M.D. (Col. Russian Air Force)
Expedition 15 Soyuz Commander & Flight Engineer
Born: October 27, 1965, in Simferopol, Russia
Education: Graduated from the Kirov Military Medical Academy in 1988.
Experience: Selected as a cosmonaut in 1996, Kotov is making his first space flight.

Clayton Anderson

Clayton Anderson
Expedition 15 Flight Engineer
Born: Born February 23, 1959, in Omaha, Neb., and considers Ashland, Neb. to be his hometown.
Education: Earned a bachelor's degree in physics from Hastings College in 1981 and a master's in aerospace engineering from Iowa State University in 1983.

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