

Expedition 6 crew carries on legacy of space exploration

By Kendra Ceule

More than three months into their stay aboard the International Space Station, the Expedition 6 crewmembers still have no trouble keeping busy. The crewmembers are Astronaut Ken Bowersox, Commander; Cosmonaut Nikolai Budarin, Flight Engineer; and Astronaut Don Pettit, NASA ISS Science Officer. They have been performing scientific research, maintaining the station and unpacking supplies from a Russian Progress resupply ship. That's not to say that the crewmembers haven't been affected by the loss of *Columbia* and her crew on Feb. 1.

"We've had time to grieve over our friends," Bowersox said during a press conference Feb. 11. "When you're up here this long, you can't just bottle up your emotions and focus all the time. It's important for us to acknowledge that the people on STS-107 were our friends and we had a connection with them and that we feel their loss. Each of us had a chance to shed some tears.

"But now it's time to move forward and we're doing that slowly. This press conference today is a huge step that's helping us move along towards our normal objectives and fulfilling our mission here."

Fulfilling that mission has involved participating in medical tests, fine-tuning the Microgravity Science Glovebox and inspecting equipment in the station's Quest Airlock. Also, all three crewmembers have participated in several television interviews, during which many of the questions centered on the *Columbia* accident and how it affects the team. The temporary cessation of space shuttle flights means that the crew could be in for a much longer-than-expected stay in orbit.

Bowersox, Budarin and Pettit have all said they are willing to stay as long as needed. Expedition 6 is scheduled to come home in early May in the Soyuz TMA-1 craft currently docked at the station. The crew will be replaced by an American astronaut and a Russian cosmonaut who will be launched in late April or early May in a Soyuz TMA-2 craft. The current crew has enough food, fuel, clothing and other materials to last through at least the end of June, if required – thanks to the Russian Progress resupply ship, which arrived at the station in early February.

No matter how long they remain on board, the Expedition 6 crew will keep researching, working and discovering – not just fulfilling their own mission, but upholding the dream of space exploration. ❖



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"I consider myself an explorer. And you can explore in many different ways, whether it's under the stage of a microscope or running off in a laboratory and making other measurements. I've been an explorer for as long as I can remember...exploring space is just one aspect of that."

–Astronaut Don Pettit, Expedition 6 NASA ISS Science Officer, pictured working in the Zvezda Service Module on the ISS

"I tell people that 95 percent of what's important about space station happens on the ground: when American engineers and Russian engineers get together; when a Canadian meets a Russian and they talk about what life is like in their countries; when we send somebody from Houston over to Japan and he talks to somebody at dinner. The relationships that we're building are building a stronger world, and that's just as important as building our space station."

–Astronaut Ken Bowersox, Expedition 6 Commander, pictured working with an experiment in a portable glovebox facility in the Destiny laboratory



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"The previous experience of our joint [international] flights has demonstrated that we are capable of working together, and that we will be working together, and the International Space Station is a very good example of that. I think we are successful in building and operating the station, and I think we will continue to be successful in that."

–Cosmonaut Nikolai Budarin, Expedition 6 Flight Engineer, pictured working with tethers and clamps from the tool panel storage in the Zvezda Service Module

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