

SOYUZ-37 LAUNCHED WITH FIRST VIETNAMESE COSMONAUT

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[Text] Moscow, July 23, TASS--TASS special correspondent Nikolay Zheleznov reports from Baykonur Cosmodrome:

The Soyuz-37 spacecraft, launched at midnight, local time, continues the program of international expeditions aboard Soviet spacecraft and orbital stations with the participation of citizens from socialist countries. The spacecraft carries the first Vietnamese cosmonaut, 33-year old pilot of the SRV Armed Forces, Lieutenant-Colonel Pham Tuan and one of the veterans of the Soviet Cosmonauts' team Colonel Viktor Borbatko.

The Soyuz-37 will dock up twenty four hours after launching with the Salyut-6 station working on which is the fourth main crew, Cosmonauts Leonid Popov and Valeriy Ryumin. The Soviet-Vietnamese crew will start conducting numerous experiments prepared by specialists from the two countries.

"The Salyut-6 station proved an exclusively efficient space laboratory aboard which, alongside fundamental research, works are being conducted non-stop for almost three years which are related to the development of various branches of the economy of socialist countries", journalists were told by Vice President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences Boris Petrov who was present at the launching. He pointed out that "although, space school in Vietnamese science was established later than in other socialist countries, many original experiments concerned with fundamental and applied problems of space medicine and biology, space technology, mapping of the surface of land and the ocean have been prepared for the Soviet-Vietnamese expedition".

Just as the previous international expeditions, the Soviet-Vietnamese space flight is scheduled for one week. Leaders of the Soviet Cosmonauts' training centre highly assess the level of knowledge accumulated by two Vietnamese pilots selected for the flight. They joined the training center just one year ago. During that time Pham Tuan and his stand-in Captain Buy Thanh Liem successfully mastered the systems of the spacecraft and the orbital station.

The Soviet-Vietnamese crew was sent off to orbit by members of the Vietnamese Party and Government delegation headed by Vo Nguyen Giap, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, first deputy chairman of the SRV Council of Ministers. Present at the cosmodrome were also representatives of Vietnamese newspapers, radio and television.

[Moscow TASS in English at 2036 GMT on 23 July adds: The Cosmonauts Viktor Gorbatko and Pham Tuan feel well and the spaceship's onboard systems are functioning normally. The crew of the Soyuz-37 spaceship started implementing the flight program.]