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## NASA announces contracts to transport American astronauts to International Space Station

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On September 23, NASA announced that they have contracted two private companies, Boeing and SpaceX, to transport American astronauts to the International Space Station (ISS). NASA Administrator Charles Bolden stated that the contracts are part of an effort to end U.S. reliance on Russia to transport crews by 2017. Additionally, the transition of low-Earth orbit transport to private industry will allow the agency to focus its resources on deep space missions, including the long-term goal of transporting humans to Mars.

NASA engineers and spaceflight specialists will oversee and certify the transport development, and each contractor will conduct between two and six missions overall. Before conducting missions to the ISS, at least one crewed test flight, with at least one NASA astronaut on board, will be required of each company. The two companies will sign Commercial Crew Transportation Capability (CCtCap) contracts; Boeing will receive \$4.2 billion and Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) will receive \$2.6 billion.

The expanded capacity provided by Boeing and SpaceX will enable the crew of the ISS to grow and allow them to conduct more research in the microgravity laboratory on board.

Sources: NASA, Reuters

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