NASA’s Starliner astronauts don’t feel ‘let down’ by Boeing’s spacecraft

NASA astronauts Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore spoke about their continued stay aboard the International Space Station during a press conference held yesterday. The two are now fully incorporated into the ISS crew, as the Boeing Starliner spacecraft that was meant to take them home last week was instead sent back to Earth uncrewed.

Early on, the two were asked if they felt “let down” by Boeing.

“Absolutely not,” said Wilmore:

> *“This operation is not easy. NASA does a great job – the people at Nasa do a great job – of making a lot of things look easy. Sending probes beyond the edge of our solar system; going in [and] getting samples from asteroids; humans in space. It’s a very risky business and things do not always turn out the way you want.”*

NASA decided not to fly the craft back with the two aboard after finding thruster issues and helium leaks in Starliner. But Wilmore said that with more time, “we could have gotten to the point, I believe, where we could have returned on Starliner. But we just simply ran out of time.” Instead, the two have become part of the ISS crew.

Williams, who Wilmore said will become the Commander of the ISS soon, said the transition to the space station’s crew was “not that hard,” as she and Wilmore had been preparing to go

to the station for years prior to their flight earlier this year. She said their later return in a SpaceX Dragon capsule at the conclusion of NASA’s Crew-9 mission is a unique opportunity for the two test pilots, adding, “We’re excited to fly in two different spacecraft; I mean, we’re testers, that’s what we do.”

Neither astronaut expressed dismay at being aboard ISS longer. “Space is my happy place,” Williams said, ”…every day you do something that’s ‘work’ – you can do it upside down, you can do it sideways, so it adds a little different perspective.”

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