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ISS Invaded by Dragons

The International Space Station was passing over the east coast of Brazil when this photo of the SpaceX Dragon capsule approaching for a rendezvous was taken on December 17, 2017. The Commercial Resupply Service mission known as CRS 13 carried about 4,800 lbs of essential scientific equipment, hardware, and crew supplies to the station. Docking was achieved via a port on the station's Harmony module.

CRS 13 exemplifies a bold new approach to space flight engineering - the development of reusable launch systems. The first stage of the Falcon 9 rocket that boosted CRS 13 off of its Cape Canaveral launch pad had done the same for CRS 11 back in June. Just minutes after launch the first stage returned once again to the Cape, setting down safely and right on target. SpaceX is working toward a 24hr turnaround time for their reusable rockets.

The CRS 13 Dragon capsule seen here was using frequent flyer miles it had earned on the CRS 6 mission in April of 2015. It was carrying completed science experiments and other materials of value when it undocked from its berth about a month later, executed a controlled deorbit, and splashed down safely in the Pacific where it was recovered in fine condition.

