

TRANSCRIPT:

**NASA ADMINISTRATOR MICHAEL GRIFFIN PRESS CONFERENCE
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Dean Acosta: Good afternoon, everybody, we appreciate your joining us here in Shanghai, China, for NASA's press briefing, let me introduce all the participants, to my right Michael Griffin, the U.S. Consul General in Shanghai Ken Jarrett, Dr. Shannon Lucid, NASA astronaut who has flown five times and was born in Shanghai, this is a homecoming for her. To my left is Bill Gerstenmaier, Associate Administrator for Space Operations at NASA, he is the head of Space Station and Shuttle Operations.

I believe we have a couple of reporters on the line from the United States. Once we ask all the questions here on site we will go to reporters listening. Please identify yourself, who you work for, and who your question is for... We'll have some brief opening remarks, the questions.

Dr. Michael Griffin: No opening remarks, but open for questions.

Acosta: Alright, we'll go to questions.

Jin: I noticed you didn't go to the Gobi Desert launch site as you had planned, I want to know why.

Griffin: I want to know why also (laughter)

Jin: and now I want to know about your itinerary duration.

Griffin: Here in Shanghai we met with Mayor Han for lunch and a very enjoyable discussion, and we met with the Shanghai branch of the Chinese academy of sciences this afternoon and saw a number of instruments made under the direction of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and were exposed to several different presentations on aspects of the Chinese space program, so it was very interesting. We ultimately elected not to go to Jashang because we evaluated, we compared the sites we would tour at Jashang versus the time it would take to get there. The length of the trip, it seemed not to be a good return, so we elected not to go.

Boggs, Associated Press: Could I follow up on that by asking were you led to believe you would see something more than you would when you got here and also I would like to ask you a general question about how'd you assess what you've seen here so far, anything surprising, anything that you think will be useful to you when you go back, and whether you think you've conveyed whether you think the Chinese space program may bring of benefit to China that you think the U.S. program has brought to the U.S.?

Griffin: we were not lead to believe we would see anything more at Jashang than we were offered, there were no promises made or invitations negated....we're aware this is a military establishment, and you're aware NASA is a civilian agency and we can only accept invitations that were offered, we can't impose those requirements and we did not try to do so. Like I said, this is a first step... (Inaudible) ...between the United States and China in an area that I think has a great potential for doing so.

Cooperation between and among nations, which are space faring nations, over the life of the International Space Station, are one of the most fruitful things we do in helping to bring our various people together, and we have that same hope here, beginning to work with China's space program. As to whether we saw anything surprising, I certainly wouldn't say we were surprised by anything. I expected to meet capable, involved, committed, energetic people who are devoted to their country's space program, and that's exactly what I saw. I would say certainly, without question, the United States has a much larger space program than China, we are spending more money on it, but the money China is spending is clearly being well spent.

They've got very obviously expert people doing the work they are doing, fully the equal of any other country doing these sorts of work, certainly nothing other than to be proud of. It's a terrific establishment. In fact, one of the points I tried to annunciate over and over again to our meetings with various groups of people was to welcome China to the rank of space faring nations by virtue of their ability to put people into orbit entirely on their own resources. That is a milestone accomplishment and one to be proud of.

Shanghai Morning Post: I wonder how many years we have to wait to see a Chinese astronaut studying aboard the Space Shuttle or the ISS?

Griffin: I think it's way too soon to comment on that. I'm sorry, I just can't. We don't have any current plans to begin working with China on the Space Shuttle and Space Station programs. The Space Shuttle will be retired by 2010 anyway, so, as I said earlier, I think it's likely that any potential cooperation between China and the United States in human spaceflight, if it ever were to occur, will come in programs that we are planning after the Space Shuttle.

Q: That would be after 2010?

Griffin: Yes.

Q: That would not be that many years, so....

Griffin: I understand. What I'm trying to say is we don't have plans for cooperation in human spaceflight between China and the United States. I certainly don't want to say that won't ever occur, but this is our first visit, ever, and we simply do not yet have such plans.

Shanghai Evening Post: I want to ask Shannon Lucid, what is the feeling of being home?

Lucid: Well, I was very excited when Mike Griffin invited me to come along on this trip. It is the first time I've been to Shanghai since I was born here, and I think that everybody's always is excited to come back to the place where they were born. My parents were married here, and actually my mother more or less grew up here in China, so I have seen family pictures of China, but they were all pre-world war II, and right up to world war II, so looking in those photographs, that was sort of the idea of what I thought of Shanghai, and you look at Shanghai today, and it's just absolutely amazing, how Shanghai has been transformed.

Q: A question for Dr. Lucid, Do you have any memories of living in Shanghai during your early years?

Lucid: Well, as I said, I was born here in Shanghai, and I spent the first year of my life here in Shanghai, and although I have a really good memory of my early childhood (laughing), I do not remember anything from my first year. And then we went back to the United States, then we came back to China when I was around four, in that age, and then we lived in, we didn't live in Shanghai, but I have lots of memories of China. We lived in Nanking, but I didn't want to say that, since that's not the way you pronounce it nowadays (laughing), and I didn't want to show my ignorance. I'm ignorant of remembering the new pronunciations. But anyway, we lived there, and I went to kindergarten in Nanking. And I just have many, many wonderful memories about living in China.

Q (unidentified) Are there plans to visit other countries around the region, like Russia, Japan in the trip?

Griffin: I've been to Russia several times since becoming administrator, and Japan once, but I will not be visiting either of them on this trip. We go from here to Los Angeles to make a speech, then I go from here to the International Astronautical Conference in Valencia, Spain.

Acosta: Let's break from here and see if any of the folks from the United States would like to ask a question. Craig Covault, are you there?

Covault: Yes, hi, good afternoon. Dr. Griffin, can you describe any exchange of views that you had the topic of transparency and openness on space projects and on a different topic, on the topic of robotic lunar, what types of science exchange ideas did you discuss relative robotic lunar exploration on both sides.

Griffin: I'll take the second question first. We did discuss closer cooperation on our two nation's science programs, and I think we all see that is something that could happen and would not be terribly difficult to have happen, whether it involves robotic lunar missions or other science, so I think we're all very encouraged by those initial discussions. Of course again, it's in the early days, none the less, the topics were broached, and favorably on both sides.

And I did make that point that with regard to cooperation on space programs generally and human space programs in particular that the greatest possible degree of transparency and openness is a requirement if for no reason more important than without it we stand a chance to kill people. We absolutely, if we are to conduct human spaceflight activities together, we have to have a great degree of trust, a great degree of sharing, a great degree of openness regarding exactly what is going on with our engineering systems or there is real danger within the mix and none of us want that. I made that point and I believe that point was understood by all.

Acosta: Warran Leary, are you on the line?

Leary: Yes, Mr. Griffin, you mention you didn't go to Jashong because of the time it takes there and what you would get to see, what facilities did you....(inaudible)

Griffin: Warren, can you try again with that question, it was so convoluted, I don't think I got it...

Leary: Let me try again, the link is breaking up a little bit. You chose not to go to JaQuan, launch facility, because you said the time investment to get there wasn't worth it considering what you could see. Did you feel you would be restricted, or couldn't see what you wanted to see because it is a PLA facility?

Griffin: we were invited out there to see the launch pad, we were told we would not have access to the buildings and facilities where spacecraft were being built and tested and prepared for launch and, um, I'm not a tourist, this business is in fact my profession, and the interesting part of the visit would have been to see the engineering facilities and to discuss those processes, Bill Gerstenmaier and I, with our peers, and Shannon. So if Bill and I and Shannon could, if we had been invited to have eye level discussions with our professional peers I think it would have been worth the trip. But I have seen a lot of launch pads in my time and didn't need to go that far to see another one.

Acosta: Irene Klotz?

Klotz: Yes, thank you. I'd like to ask either Dr. Griffin or Mr. Gerstenmaier if you could please describe anything that you've learned about the Chinese space assets or the program that you didn't know before going to China. Thank you.

Gerstenmaier: I guess, Irene, this is Bill, I guess the purpose of this trip is kinda an introductory trip, was kinda get acquainted and kinda see in general and broad terms what their space program was about and what they're doing and the idea was to gain kinda a general overall knowledge so then we could come back with some more technical experts where we could get some lower level groups to get kicked off to go and do some more indepth study and understand things back and forth...in terms of what we saw, and what we accomplished, I think we did exactly what we set out to do.

We saw things at a top level, we saw areas that are interesting to us that I think we'll ask our experts at a lower level to pursue and understand in the future, so again, this trip really accomplished what it was supposed to do which was a kind of get acquainted overview of the China space activity and see where things falls, so in terms of what we wanted to accomplish I think we've really accomplished what we wanted. Next steps will bring in a little more lower level detail in and more specifics about where we're going.

Mark Careau, Houston Chronicle: A couple of questions. One, I wonder if the Chinese discussed, at any level, their lunar exploration agenda and two, I wonder if you could sorta define what 'transparency' means in this process.

Griffin: Well, the folks we met with did in fact discuss the robotic lunar exploration goals that they have, I mean, they're launching their spacecraft next year, and we've had a fairly good discussion of their first lunar-orbiting spacecraft and its mission, the laser, actually today we saw an engineering model of the laser altimeter that will go on that mission, that was a very good discussion. and very enjoyable.

I would certainly, you know, you guys are taking a tone that I'm not sure I would really want to endorse. We, as I said before we came over, we avoided creating expectations for ourselves, as Great just said, it's a get acquainted visit, it's been very rewarding and our hosts could hardly have been nicer. I don't know more, I don't know actually how much they could have been in greeting us and showing us around Chinese space facilities. So they've really been great. With regard to transparency and openness, I mean, I'm sure you're aware Mark that with our spaceflight partner nations on the international Space Station I mean we know, exactly, how each others systems work, and exactly how our operational control policies and procedures will be implemented because if we're going to fly together, we have to depend on each other.

And so I don't know what more to say about that. Transparency and openness means being able to see and touch and ask questions and get answers and China and the United States are not yet at that point, and that will be at the end of a much longer road that we have not traveled thus far. That is not a criticism, that's just a statement of fact. This is our very first visit, it is not our last visit, but it's our very first one.

Acosta: OK, we'll come back here to Shanghai for a couple of more questions....

Hong Kong Times: My question is there any plans between the two countries on aeronautics education.

Griffin: we did not discuss aeronautics education; in fact, we did not discuss aeronautics at all. Or education at all.

Q; In an American newspaper a columnist has criticized your visit to China because they fear that the future of American space cooperation with China will possibly give China unparalleled power in the enterprise.

Griffin: I hardly know where to start. China is a powerful nation and a great nation and is home to the oldest civilizations we have in the world. The United States is a newer and younger nation, but a powerful and great nation. There is no possible purpose to be served by creating or advocating adversarial relations between the United States and China. The best possible goals we can have are to find ways to narrow any differences between us, and there are differences, but it serves no ones purpose to exacerbate those, we need to look toward those things we have in common, that we share and that we can do together. And that's what this trip is about.

Acosta: Alright, we have time for just about a few more questions.

Q: You and Mr. Soon have a dialog to continue between NASA and CNSA at least once a year. I want to know what kind of terms of those dialogs and welcome to China in future U.S.

Griffin: I don't know what kind of dialogs we will have, we're going to pursue that issue, we've agreed to talk again, as Mr. Gertenmier said earlier, any follow up discussions in the near future would be between people who are closer to the working level, we will see, and as to whether I will be able to come back to China while administrator of NASA I don't know yet, I hope so, but I don't know.

Acosta: Is there anyone who has not had an opportunity to ask a question who would want to ask a question? Alright, any follows? Anyone back in the states?

Covault: With a follow, if I may, For Dr. Griffin again, China has a number of ocean and atmospheric programs in addition to it's two weather satellite systems, can you summarize some of the specific cooperative ideas you discussed on weather, climate and environmental research?

Griffin: Not really, Craig. We did agree there is data sharing which can be useful. It's a good idea to have programmatic knowledge of what we plan on doing to get the most out of both programs, there is already a certain degree of interaction between the United States – NASA folks and NOAA folks – and Chinese space agency people on those issues. In fact, Admiral Lautenbacher will be over here next month. This is area which is completely non-threatening to both sides and of benefit to all people everywhere, and it is certainly non-contentious. We didn't get into that level of detail on this visit.

Acosta: Anyone else on the line, Warren, Irene or Mark?

Leary: with a follow up, if I can... For Mr. Griffin, you mentioned you had a good discussion about the lunar orbiting spacecraft, and got to see the laser altimeter, and that type of thing, did you discuss, or have anyone discuss, data sharing from that mission, and how it might flow into our plans for the Vision for Space Exploration?

Griffin: there was some mention, as with other programs, if it wouldn't be a good idea to share data, and certainly we're prepared to discuss that.

Carreau: This is Mark Careau from Houston with a follow up...

Acosta: Two more questions, Mark, you get one, then the last one here in Shanghai...

Careau: To follow up on New York Times question, was there any talk about exchanging instruments to fly on each others missions, or is that one of those thoughts that's way out there?

Griffin: certainly it's not way out, but I mean nobody's gonna...the Chinese mission is launching in April and Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter will launch hopefully by the end of 08, so nobody's going to be swapping instruments on those two near-term missions. What comes after? We might very well consider such things. Again, those are the points to be brought up in follow on discussions. You're asking the same kinds of questions we're asking ourselves. I don't want to leave shock and surprise in my wake, but we don't have the answers yet.

Acosta: Question here in Shanghai...

Q: Dr. Lucid, you said you had seen cities in space, so, have you ever seen Shanghai in space?

Lucid: I was on space station Mir for six months, I obviously had a very keen interest in looking at Shanghai and seeing what I could identify. And so, many times we were flying over Shanghai I would look out .. Unfortunately many times you couldn't see much because of the pollution or because of rain clouds, etc. but I was able to see quite a bit of China, and I really enjoy looking at China whenever we flew over.

Klotz: I was just curious, from any of the NASA contingent, um, if you found you were completely open to take photographs or recordings or if you found your restrictions or movements or desires on what you wanted to see on this first visit were restricted at all?

Griffin: Irene, this is Mike, I mean the question didn't even come up. I don't particularly enjoy taking photographs, and don't even own a camera or recorder, so ah, the issue just never came up. We had, what is this, Wednesday? We had Sunday, Monday yesterday and today of very good visits with very capable and very committed folks and it was a very enjoyable trip al the way around and we learned a lot. I don't know what else to say.

Acosta: I can tell you from my perspective, too, form a PAO perspective, Irene, we had complete access. I shot plenty of photos. Some of them are good, some of them are bad, depending on subject (laughter), but we had no troubles in shooting photographs or getting around or shooting photographs as well.

That will conclude our press briefing, I want to thank everybody for being involved here in Shanghai and our folks back in the states who woke up early. Thank you very much, have a nice afternoon and morning back in the states.

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