

NASA HEADQUARTERS  
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
PRESS CONFERENCE WITH  
ADMINISTRATOR MICHAEL GRIFFIN  
APRIL 18, 2005

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**MR. ACOSTA:** Thank you for joining us here in Washington and from across the country participating in NASA field centers. I'm Dean Acosta with NASA Public Affairs. Thanks for joining us today.

Before I introduce the NASA Administrator, I want to go over a few guidelines with everyone here and for around the centers. We'll begin with questions here in Washington, and then go to the various centers. Please wait for the microphone before asking your question, and don't forget to tell us your name and affiliation. Many of us--many of you we already know, but some we don't, so please, that consideration.

And because of the large number of reporters, who want to participate in today's

briefing, please limit your inquiries to one question and to one follow-up. And please try to limit the multipart question, so we'd appreciate that as well.

All right, again thank you for taking the time to join us this afternoon, and it's my pleasure to introduce the NASA Administrator Michael Griffin.

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Thanks, Dean. The reason he wanted you to limit the multipart question is because I don't have the bandwidth to handle more than very simple ones, so, you know, let's not be too hard on me (laughs).

It's my fifth day since the Senate conferred on me the responsibility of being NASA Administrator, and my third real day on the job. And the first couple days last week were involved with in-processing at one spot and out-processing at another. So this morning we were able to get two things.

As I had mentioned last week to the NASA team members in a more, but not totally, closed environment, of course, because of as a NASA select

I am very grateful to the President for his confidence in me and to the Senate for endorsing that confidence, and I think I'm not exaggerating if I say that I'm humbled by the opportunity to lead our team during--during this very promising time, the most promising time we've seen in decades.

I will try to be more accessible rather than less accessible to you, so this will not be by any means the only media opportunity that we'll provide for you, and I appreciate C-Span's role in televising this event today for a wider audience.

I've already outlined my priorities as administrator during my Senate confirmation hearing and at other opportunities, but let me just run through them quickly again. The immediate priority and, of course, first priority, most important priority is return to flight. I want to make sure that we leave absolutely no stone unturned in making certain that we are as safe as we know how to be in flying. In fact, I'm, at the conclusion of this press conference, I'm headed down to KSC for a design certification review involving the orbiter.

They don't need me, obviously, to do that, but I need them. And so I'm going there.

You've heard me say that we need to speed up development of the crew exploration vehicle and to complete the space station and retire the shuttle in an orderly manner. Those are tall challenges, and I expect it will take the rest of my term to make sure that they are fully implemented. And some will remain--much will remain for the individual who follows me.

I've also said that once we return the shuttle to flight we will begin to examine the options to extend the service life of the Hubble space telescope. We don't know that we can do that, but we will begin to look at the options.

And, finally, we need to make that we allocate our resources in our facilities in keeping with the president's vision for space exploration, which is NASA's new mission. Thank you very much for allowing me a few minutes for those opening remarks, and I'd, again, rather cede as much time as I can to you, so it's your turn.

**MR. ACOSTA:** Let's go with Warren, The New York Times.

**MR. LEARY:** Warren Leary, The New York Times. Many administrators come to Washington, and they hit the ground running. You had to hit the ground sprinting. Can you give us an idea of what's happened in the first few days here and also some of your immediate personnel changes and what we might expect in that area?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Well, what I--as I said, what I've done in the first few days is mostly out-process from one job and in-process in another on a time scale that was both very flattering from the Senate. I had no idea that a confirmation could be accomplished so quickly. Very flattering and, of course, very challenging and very important because of all that we have on our plate, as you said.

Today I had my first staff meeting with the NASA senior management team. You will have to ask them how it went--I can't tell you--and that would be beyond my ken. Organizational changes I've indicated to the team, and it is--it is for general

distribution that the main--the main organizational change that we are implementing at this point is that we're establishing what I have called a program analysis and evaluation shop that we've not had an office--I should be more dignified. That office will be headed by a non-career SES. Scott Pace will have several reporting functions underneath it. I will leave it to other avenues at other times to get into detail about that. But that's the office that I look to or will be looking to as the forward-looking planning as well as the analysis of how we're doing, what we're doing within NASA.

That's the main thing so far, Warren. As far as personnel changes, NASA had got a great team. It's got great teams at every center. I'm not really looking at that right now; I'm looking at how we get off the ground, moving, as you said hit the ground sprinting rather than running. And we're just--I don't have plans for any immediate personnel changes.

**MR. ACOSTA:** All right, we'll take a couple more questions here at Headquarters before we start

moving around the centers. Let's start with--Guy, do you have a question?

**MR. GUGLIOTTA:** Guy Gugliotta, The Washington Post. There's been a lot of talk about canceling some of the smaller programs in NASA. I especially wanted to ask about the Voyager program. Is your Office of Analysis going to be looking at these programs to determine what to do?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** I don't know that that question needs to go to that new office. I think we can handle that within the Science Mission Directorate, and with guidance from Deputy Administrator Gregory and I--me. That should be a fairly straightforward examination of the priorities and importance we attach to Voyager and some of the other extended missions versus the--you know, again as an economist would say, the opportunity cost of the money.

We have been made aware that many have objected to the concept of shutting off some of these extended missions in what people regard as a premature way. We're sympathetic to those concerns.

We are relooking at it and have promised to do so. I would emphasize that we're many months away from when those extended missions would have been terminated, and it certainly would not be done without a full and careful review. That is not to say that all missions are of the same importance. Voyager may well outrank others whose time to be turned off really has come. So I'm not making a blanket offer that we're going to reach a particular answer on any one mission or that we will treat them all as a block. But we are going to consider it carefully before we turn anything off.

**MR. ACOSTA:** All right, one more question here. Let's go out here down in front. Be sure to-be sure and identify yourself.

**MR. BORENSTEIN:** Seth Borenstein, Knight-Ridder Newspapers. There is the Stafford-Covey Commission has yet to sign off on all the boxes for return to flight. If they do not sign off by the time a decision comes along, your managers, Bill Parsons, Wayne Hale, have said they could see recommending to you to go ahead and launch without

the okay of Stafford-Covey. It'll be up to you. Would you go ahead with launching without all the boxes being checked by Stafford-Covey? And why would you do that or not do that?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Well, in concept, yes, I would if Wayne Hale, whom I highly respect, and others recommend that we should consider launching despite not having filled all the squares on Stafford-Covey, that is something I would consider, because I don't believe that engineers make blanket decisions in advance, and I don't believe the technical decisions are a voting matter. Stafford-Covey will have their criteria; the line managers in charge of the program will have theirs.

Now, I cannot begin at this time--and I'll say it again--I cannot begin at this time to say under what specific conditions that NASA might elect to go ahead with the launch, given a disparity of opinion between various interested parties are to whether we should or should not. That will depend on the technical details of the issue at hand, but that is precisely the point. We study those issues and

we resolve them as they occur, and then we make our decision, and we hold ourselves responsible for it.

Advisory groups advise. The NASA line managers have the responsibility for executing the program. We need to take our advice very seriously and very carefully when it is given, and we need never to be defensive about receiving advice from outside. But at the end of the day, the people wearing government and contractor badges charged with launching the vehicle will be the ones who are responsible and accountable for their actions.

**MR. ACOSTA:** Let's now go out to the centers for a couple of questions. Let's start out at Johnson.

**MR. CARREAU:** Thank you. This is Mark Carreau. I'm a reporter with The Houston Chronicle, and I'd like to follow up on that question. Given that you're making the shuttle's return to flight your top priority, how will you go about procedurally satisfying yourself that it is safe enough and that the criteria that need to be met to ensure a successful mission has been met?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Well, I have no illusions about the fact that I am the person in the chain of command least knowledgeable about the full details of shuttle operation and its readiness for return to flight. I have a lot to learn, and I have a lot to learn very quickly. And there is no possible way that I can learn it all.

Nonetheless I have enormous confidence in the shuttle team, both NASA and contractors, and what my focus will be on will be learning everything about the process that has gone into fixing the problems that led to the loss of STS-107 and moving forward to really a new process, a new vehicle, and a new launch criteria, learning everything that I can about that, and understanding not only what was done but what was the rationale behind doing it: How was it done? Who implemented it? Who agreed? Who disagreed? Where there was concern, where there was dissent, and exploring all of that.

I think one of the things that clearly came out of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board's report was the necessity to make sure that there are

paths from bottom to top and from side to side within the NASA community so that all information needing to be communicated is communicated, and that it's all listened to and weighted appropriately.

Again, in the end, someone must decide yes or no. The thing to do is to take into account all of the knowledge that we have. I will be one person in that chain. I will probably know less about it than anyone else, but I will make certain that everyone has given me the most convincing technical arguments on why it's okay to launch, if it is okay to launch, before we commit to going ahead.

**MR. ACOSTA:** Let's now go out to Glenn Research Center for another question.

**MS. SCHAEFER:** Yes. This is Karen Schaefer with WCPN, National Public Radio in Cleveland. NASA Glenn is one of the centers which is going to be losing some personnel and programs due to aeronautics cuts, and, among others, also Langley and I guess Ames, perhaps some others as well.

Folks here are anxiously awaiting a rollout of some of the new space exploration projects so

they can bid on them. But there appears to be a gap in time between the time that facilities here may have to be mothballed and people laid off and those new bid opportunities come out. Is this something that your program analysis shop might take a closer look at?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** It certainly is one of the things that we are reviewing, not just within that new office but within the other existing offices as well. We are concerned about that. I would be making it up if I said that I was fully cognizant of all that is going on in that areas. I'm not. With this short amount of time that I've had, I just don't see how I can be, but it is an important topic. We understand that, and we're taking a very close look at it.

**MR. ACOSTA:** Let's come back out to Headquarters for a couple of more questions before we go back around the centers. Let's go to Keith.

**MR. COWING:** Keith Cowing, [nasawatch.com](http://nasawatch.com). You've mentioned several times that you--I guess you're frustrated with the pace at which the CEV and

some of these things are currently laid out. You're got a major procurement activity underway with the CEV with a big decision due sometime in September. If you're going to accelerate that activity, wouldn't you want to stop, put that on hold, do a re-think of the CEV procurement? And then I have a follow-up.

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Well, we are going to re-think our entire program in that area because right now, as is well known, publicly released, we're talking about flying the CEV with clear in 2014. Members of Congress have indicated to me that they consider that unacceptable. People in the Executive branch have indicated that they think it's not advisable, and it doesn't work for me either. So we're going to be reviewing those plans.

If that requires that we delay receiving responses to the RFP that's out on the street, then so be it. Better to take a little bit of time up front and get what we really want.

**MR. COWING:** Okay, related question. You have a lot of roadmap activities that you've

inherited many of which will not even be done until the fall, and the Academy's not even going to come back with their pronouncement on its fitness until late in the fall, well after you've got to make some decisions.

It seems to be backwards. Are you going to modify that roadmapping process such that the input--or the output from them can be used as input to your decision-making?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** I don't think the roadmap activities are on a pace that is consistent with the decision-making that we have to do. I will probably be establishing focused, small teams representing the breadth of experience throughout NASA, throughout the centers and targeted other institutions as necessary, in order to be helping with some of these larger scale architectural issues.

**MR. ACOSTA:** I'll take one more question here at Headquarters before we go back out to the centers. Let's go--right here.

**MS. LYTTLE:** Tamara Lytle from The Orlando Sentinel. Looking down the road, have you had any time to think about the economic feasibility of the Mars portion of the president's space vision, and given the constraints that Congress is dealing with how you afford up?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Well, I'm on record on more than one occasion of saying that I don't think missions to Mars are unaffordable with the budgets that we have if they're utilized appropriately. Everything that I know to date about what it will cost us to do a Mars mission, frankly in concert with colleagues, is summarized in a Planetary Society report that Owen Garriott, an old and good friend, and I chaired on behalf of the Planetary Society with numerous coauthors. That report included a section on costing.

The costing analysis was done at a very high level. It was basically weight-based costing which at this point, because we don't have mission architectures to point to, nor do we have specific designs, nor would it be appropriate in this time to

have specific designs because we're not going to Mars next week or next year, the costing analysis that we've done was based on--on order of magnitude weight estimates that would be required as well as assuming certain productivity gains that have been characteristic of the U.S. economy as a whole.

Now, that's a very labyrinthine statement, sorry. What it adds up to, though, is I think we have a pretty good first order effort of what it takes to go to Mars, and that estimate is summarized in that report. And, frankly, that is the best knowledge I have of what it ought to take if we do it right.

The answer came out to be that in present-day dollars you could probably go to Mars for about what we spent on Apollo over--and talking about Apollo now over the total period of its performance. There is no need to go to Mars in an eight-year period, eight years and two months the way that Apollo was done. It is a--as President Bush said--a journey not a race. So I view that at a few billion dollars a year, spaced out over a number of years,

voyages to Mars are imminently doable, and I would urge you to download that report from the website because I don't have any better thinking to offer you than what I put into that report. I wish I did. It would be nice to be smarter, but that's the best I got right now.

**MR. ACOSTA:** All right, let's go out to Marshall Space Flight Center for a couple of questions.

**MR. KESNER:** Hi, I'm Ken Kesner with The Huntsville Times. I am curious, sir, you talked about the time line for the crew exploration and a desire to move that up. Is doing that and possibly shrinking the gap between the shuttle program and the crew exploration vehicle going to help protect any of the jobs at Marshall?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** It may well. I indicated earlier that we were taking a close look, that we were reviewing our skill-mix needs. I didn't say it in these terms but I will say we're looking at the skill mixes that we require, the people that we require, where they would be, what

they would be doing in light of the importance that the Congress and the Administration place on not having a five-year gap in the ability of the United States to access space with human crew.

So all of that is on the table. I can't give you the answer as to how it's going to come out, because I've been on the job for three days. But those are avenues that we are pursuing, yes.

**MR. ACOSTA:** I believe we have one more question.

**REPORTER:** There's been a lot of anxiety here among Marshall employees over the past several months. I've worried about the Center's future, worried about their jobs. What could you say to employees to make them feel a little bit better about all of that?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** I can't imagine returning to the moon or going to Mars, or developing the capability to explore and utilize the near Earth asteroids without the capabilities that Marshall Space Center brings to bear. Marshall is our launch vehicle center. We're not going to be

establishing another one, and we can't get there with none of them. So we have one, and it isn't going to go away; it's crucially important to me. Marshall has other skills as well, but their prime directive is to be NASA's launch vehicle center.

I'm not going to change that. I wouldn't want to if I could. I--I cannot imagine that there is a center within NASA that is better positioned for the future, given the president's vision for space exploration than is Marshall.

There are--we are all living through some short-term dislocations. I cannot hide that from you. Again, I wouldn't if I could. The loss of Columbia precipitated over the last couple of years a major re-examination of what should be the purpose of the United States Civil Space Flight Program, both human and robotic. Those conclusions have been summarized in the president's speech of January 14th a year ago and in a written policy statement from the White House.

As everyone here knows quite well, I fully support that. I think it is exactly the right thing

for the United States to be doing. We can't get from the program we were executing to the program we want to execute without having some dislocations. It simply cannot be done, or if it can be done, I am not bright enough to figure out how to do it. There are some things we were doing that will be judged less important in the future; there are some things we want to do that have not been judged important in the recent past.

To get from one set of priorities and programs to another is going to require some careful rethinking; it is going to some skillful surgery on the budget and on our--and on our center resources and facilities. We--you have my promise, all of you, that that will be done as well and as ably as we can manage it. But to say that it can be done without some transition pain would be disingenuous.

**MR. ACOSTA:** From Marshall Space Flight Center now let's go to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena.

**MS. GROSHONG:** Hi. This is Kimm Groshong. I'm from The Pasadena Star News. I'm just wondering

if you feel that the Mars program, as it's currently laid out, is the way to get to Mars and beyond with a human exploration mission eventually.

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** I have no idea. I have had no--other than at the very cursory level, I haven't had any opportunity to study it. I think I would be arrogating to myself more knowledge than I possess if I were to comment.

**MR. ACOSTA:** Let's come back to Headquarters now for a couple of questions. Over there, corner.

**MR. HARRIS:** Hello, I'm Richard Harris from National Public Radio. Your first priority seems to be to get the shuttle flying again. It seems like your next priority is to retire it. I'm wondering if that creates some sort of institutional problems for--sort of the whipsaw effect that's sure to follow in the next couple of years, if you've had a chance to give that any thought.

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Oh, I lived through the period from 1975 through '81 when we weren't flying any more Apollo missions and were flying

shuttle missions. And although I didn't work on Apollo and didn't work on shuttle, I, of course, was in the space program, and the dislocations from that period rippled. There was no one left untouched. That is part of the reason why I think that it is a major priority today to reduce that gap.

Now, recognize that the people in this country who know how to fly human-rated spacecraft are within NASA and NASA's contractor family. And whether they are flying shuttle or flying the next vehicle, their skills will be needed. The trick for us here is to effect an orderly transition between what we're doing today on shuttle and what we will be doing for the next generation of vehicle not even yet designed.

One way to--as I've said now, repeatedly, one way to affect that, or to at least allow success to be one of the possible outcomes, is not to have a five-year gap between the two.

Another way to effect that would be to make appropriate--to put appropriate reliance on shuttle-derived components where we think that makes sense,

and where it doesn't make sense then to let people understand that there is a transition coming.

**MR. ACOSTA:** Let's have another question here at Headquarters. Tracy?

**MS. WATSON:** Tracy Watson, USA Today. Since you have, as you say, so much to learn about the shuttle and whether it's going to be better to fly again, I'm wondering if you're contemplating delaying launch till July to give you time to come up to speed.

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** We can delay it until 2010 and I won't know as much about the shuttle as the people who are charged with launching it. The confidence that I derive will be from-- derived from the management team and the engineering team that has to execute it, from their responses to my questions and from the questions of many other external reviewers, by looking at the process according to which they have decided that it is safe to launch and by their attitude as they seek to prove to all external reviewers, not just me, that it is safe to launch.

I'm not trying to be, and would never even consider trying to be the sole point of encyclopedic technology--technical knowledge on whether or not it would be okay to launch. It's a team effort. Last week I got installed as the captain of the team. That means if we've got a close call or a tie vote, I decide. But I'm hoping that our team has done their work so thoroughly that it's not a close call, it's not a tie, it's a obvious decision.

**MR. ACOSTA:** From Headquarters let's now go to Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

**MS. DUNN:** Yes. Hello, this is Marsha Dunn of the Associated Press. Griffin, you mentioned that you're going to take another look at a Hubble shuttle servicing mission after return to flight. And does that mean more or less that if the first two flights go off well, then you will be giving, quite possibly, Hubble a second chance. Because you can't wait too long, how do you see the decision-making process regarding Hubble in the upcoming months?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Immediately after the first flight is launched, we are going to undertake an internal review to weigh the pros and cons of reinstating SM-4, Hubble Shuttle Servicing Mission 4. I--I would not care to prejudice the outcome of that because I need to know more. What I said in my confirmation hearing was that by a certain lucky coincidence--or unlucky, as you will --I have the opportunity to study quite closely the Robotic Servicing Mission, and, along with the unanimous view of the other engineers who were asked to be outside reviewers on that mission, came to the conclusion that although the Goddard and contractor team that was working on it was extraordinarily able, was working very hard, was totally committed, it was just as good as we could put in place, that the demands of the Robotic Servicing Mission were such that it was unlikely to be accomplished successfully in the time frame necessary before the Hubble degraded to a point where it could not be recovered.

So in that hearing I said as far as I am concerned, the Robotic Servicing Mission is off the table. We will, of course--NASA will, of course, obey any legislative direction that the Congress provides and, as many of you know--as probably most of you know--we have language this year directing us to spend money on a Hubble Servicing Mission. I hope to work with the Congress to, I would say, get a certain amount of breathing room to get our first return to flight mission off, to have time to study carefully again the pros and cons of doing SM-4, and to bring them back the best answer that I and the NASA community can provide. And that's all we can do right now.

Now, I am very aware that it needs to be done expeditiously, and as soon as STS-114 has landed safely we will be--we will be studying this new problem. I simply do not want to perturb the return to flight folks with this issue at this time.

**MR. HARWOOD:** Bill Harwood with CBS News. You mentioned during your confirmation hearing that recommendations made by accident panels, the

conditions that led to those sometimes change when all is said and done. But I'm curious as to what your philosophical bent is, realizing the specifics are still in front of you. But, philosophically, the recommendation about having a tile and RCC repair before you return to flight. What is your sense of how much of that CAIB recommendation must be there before you fly?

And there's another reporter here, but for reasons that escape me they're not letting him ask a question, and I'll just ask it for him. He also wants to know how will you know or be satisfied that the cultural changes that some say are needed for safety are being implemented or will have been implemented to your satisfaction for flight?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Second question first. I don't know because I don't know how to measure cultural change. I--you know, culture is something that you feel, and I'm now reimmersing myself in the NASA culture after a departure of 11 years in which I was in industry and other government laboratories and other government

operations. So I don't know how to answer your question.

Regarding the first question, I'm actually--I actually don't remember the first part of it. It involves the--ask it again.

**MR. HARWOOD:** -- on RCC tile repair vis-à-vis the CAIB recommendation and how things are today.

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** RCC tile recommendation I don't know. I'm going to have to immerse myself in that to some considerable extent because I have been made aware already through other press coverage that there is some disparity of opinion on that topic. So that will, obviously, be a high priority in which to immerse myself.

A couple of points, however: It's not at all clear from a fundamental viewpoint of the hypersonic aerodynamics involved that tile repair is ever going to be a very easy thing. It would be very, very easy to make a "fix," quote/unquote, to a, you know, a tile known to be damaged and make the problem worse by inserting material or other changes

that would trip the boundary layer, result in an early transition to turbulence, result in much higher heating much further forward on the wing than would be desired, and could result, if there's enough drag differential, in the loss of control of the orbiter. It would be very easy to make the problem worse rather than better.

The whole idea of tile repair is a very good idea, but the implementation of it could well be beyond that which we know how to do. I have said in other fora that you can beat me but you can't make me smarter. I'm already as smart as I know how to be, and so are all the people who are working on shuttle. It comes down to the fact that we simply don't know how to repair shuttle tile which suffers a certain amount of damage in orbit, then that will be the answer. And then--and I don't know that that's the answer, but that is what the squabble is about--and if that's how it comes out, then we now need to elevate it to a higher level of decision-making.

Do we think we have solved the problems with foam shedding on the external tank with a high enough degree of confidence that we believe nothing will fall on the orbiter that can damage it? That's a different question.

Are we willing to take the statistical risk to fly the orbiter again in the event that we don't have the tile repair capability? That's yet another question.

I don't know what the answers to those are. But the clearance for return to flight cannot be simply a go or no go decision based on: Can you repair a tile in orbit? Even if a tile repair mechanism is offered up as a good idea, and even if the capability is on board the orbiter to implement that, there is not a certain way of knowing whether that repair will have worsened the situation or, in fact, improved it.

We need to get these kinds of facts out on the table so that people at large understand that this is not a simple issue.

**MR. ACOSTA:** Just to be clear also, as we're going around the centers and with Headquarters, when there's time allotted, we'll go back around the centers to follow up with reporters who don't have an opportunity to ask questions.

But right now let's go out to Langley for a question.

**MR. SCHLECK:** Dave Schleck with The Daily Press ... There is also a lot of anxiety here at Langley about possible future job cuts. The Director here predicts under the proposed 2006 budget there may be as many as 1000 layoffs, or 1000 people leaving the work force. It's about a fourth of the work force here, and we've all heard about the memo that came out of NASA Headquarters earlier this year that talked about closing the major wind tunnels here at Langley.

Do you have anything to say that might reassure the folks here at Langley Research Center about the future of the center and the future of civil service work force?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** In the very, very near term, like responding to memos that you're saying are coming out, of course, not. In the longer term, yes, I do.

A couple of--couple of points. Again, as I've said earlier and as I've now said several times in different environments, we really need to face up to the fact that we are changing what we are doing with the United States Civil Space Program. I am one of those who believes it is for the better, but without question we are changing it. And I dislike to put it this way, but there will be enterprises and individuals who are better off after the change and others who will be worse.

The nation makes available to us within NASA a certain amount of money to execute a multitude of programs. I think they're all good. I am deeply impressed with what has been done in aeronautics by NASA over the decades, and I want that to continue. I am of those who believe that the nation now has a space policy and needs and aeronautics policy. I have been asked by Senator

Hutchison from Texas whether I would be willing to consider aeronaut- --to be part of a group to consider aeronautics policy at a higher level, and I have been asked the same question by--by Mr. Calvert and Mr. Wolf in the House, all of whom have expressed considerable concern at one time or another, as has Senator Allen over the future of aeronautics. And, of course, I think we need a discussion within the technical and research community about what we intend to do with aeronautics.

That said, the fact is that in the president's program going forward, aeronautics is not as high a priority as returning NASA to a path on which space exploration is prominently featured, and that must be dealt with. Again, my pledge to you is to deal with that as humanely and as logically as-as I can manage.

**MR. ACOSTA:** From Langley let's head out-- back to Johnson Space Center in Houston.

**MR. CARREAU:** Thank you for the follow-up. This is Mark Carreau from The Houston Chronicle. If

I'm reaching here too far, I'm sorry. But I wonder if you can give us your sense of your guiding principles that will help in this return to flight issue, given that you intend to rely heavily on the shuttle engineers who have been immersed in this for the last two years in the advice of Stafford-Covey.

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Well, I think you've answered your own question. I intend to immerse myself in the process. I intend to listen very carefully to what Stafford-Covey says. Both Tom and Dick--Tom Stafford and Dick Covey--are old friends of mine, more than--well more than a decade, as are other members of the team. I know many of the folks participating in the shuttle program from earlier lives and will be seeking their counsel. In the end I think, collectively, we, the organization, will--will make the right decision. I don't know right now what that right decision is.

Certainly, we won't delay things gratuitously because there is an opportunity-cost to delaying the shuttle's ability to return to the station; but we won't launch, precipitously, either.

**MR. ACOSTA:** That'll conclude the questions around the centers. Let's come back to Headquarters for a couple of closing questions. Brian?

**MR. BERGER:** Brian Berger with Space News. Mike, how big an issue for you is dealing with the Iran Nonproliferation Act and the restrictions it imposes on NASA buying Soyuz from Russia after the end of this year?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Well, I think it's obvious what the restriction is. It would mean that under our present flight rules we would only have U.S. astronauts on board the station at a time when the shuttle was visiting because when we're no longer being furnished Soyuz capsules by Russia, we would not have a clear escape mechanism. That fact has eluded no one.

There is an interagency group that is examining that issue and putting together alternatives to be considered at the policy level in the Executive branch and to be considered on the Hill. The process isn't done, it's not finished. I, by virtue of my recently acquired position, will

be joining it at some point, but, obviously, have not yet.

So, honestly, Brian, you're asking me something that I just haven't had time to get involved in. You can probably read in The Economist a few weeks ago as succinct an analysis of the issue as you can get anywhere. It's--it's a tough problem.

**MR. ACOSTA:** A couple more questions here at Headquarters. Let's go right up here.

**MR. LEBIDEV:** Ivan Lebidev for the Russian News Agency, Tass. Because of the Russian Space Agency, Anatoly Perminov said last week that he would be more than happy to meet you at the bicameral (ph) launch site during the landing called the ISS Expedition 10 scheduled for the 25th of April. But I think you indicated already that you won't be able to go there, and would better meet with him at the KSC, which is quite understandable.

But do you have any plans to meet your Russian counterpart at the Cape Canaveral during the shuttle launch and not just to witness the launch of

the shuttle but also to discuss some of the important operations concerning the preparation between the two agencies, in particular the so-called problem of the balance of the contribution to various ISS problem? In other words, the use of Soyuz--brand, Mike--(unintelligible.)--question. Thank you.

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:**Regarding the use of Soyuz, I can't at this time go beyond the answer I gave to Brian.

Regarding the opportunity to meet Russian space officials at return to flight launch, yes, I absolutely look forward to doing that. Regarding the opportunity to go to Russia again and meet with Mr. Perminov, whom I have not met but would greatly enjoy doing, I will do that at the earliest opportunity. I simply cannot do it in April. So I will probably look forward to doing that either for a progress flight in the fall or for the next manned launching in the fall.

I also expect to be at the Paris Air Show, and it may well be that several of our new

international partners, including Mr. Perminov and others from Russia, will be at the Paris Air Show as well. If they are, they will--they will see me there.

Going forward, international cooperation is an important part of our efforts, as everyone here well knows. I have said a number of times that I think the partnership arrangements that have evolved for the international space station and which have survived enormous vicissitudes are as important as anything else we gained from the program. I have--I have been very clear about that.

So meeting my international counterparts is important to me, but I have some other things that are a little bit ahead of it on the priority list.

**MR. ACOSTA:** We have time for two more questions here at Headquarters. Let's go up front, right up here.

**MR. McLAIN:** Hi. Damian McLain with Bloomberg News. To speed up the development of the new crew exploration vehicle, what steps do you need to take right now with the possible contractors?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** You're asking a question more specific than I can get into at this point just because I don't know what the right answers are. We've got people now starting today who are looking at exactly that, and when we've got answers I'll give them to you, but I don't have them now.

And, sorry, I didn't see where you're coming from. Try standing up here when the lights are shining in your eyes and see how well you do.

**MR. ACOSTA:** One last question here at headquarters. Let's go up front here to Debbie.

**MS. ZABARENKO:** Hi, I'm Deborah Zabarenko. I work for Reuters. This is going to sound like a softball question, but it isn't really. You said at the top that you saw this as one of the most promising periods at NASA in decades. Frankly, a lot of people would look at the hand you've been dealt and see it as one of the most challenging times for NASA in decades in terms of staff, in terms of projects, in terms of, you know, demands on NASA's budget. Why do you think it's so promising?

**ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN:** Because in change there's opportunity. It is a challenging time. If everything were going along and we were doing for the next three decades the stuff we've been doing for the last three decades, frankly, I don't believe I would want the job.

We have--you know, we've arrived at passed a watershed moment in the direction, a strategic direction of the American Space Program. I believe that the American Space Program is among the very most important things that this nation executes on behalf of its people and on behalf of the people of the world, to be honest with you. So I think it's important. I think it's extremely important that we are now on a different path than we have been. So that's why I was very pleased to have been nominated at this time and confirmed at this time.

To say that it would be without trouble is naive in the extreme, but as I've often said most of my own personal career has been built on doing one new thing after another and in solving problems. I've never done the same thing twice. I don't know

how manufacturing and production engineers do their work. The concept of turning out 1000 or 1100 Boeing 747s and making them all work eludes me.

But I do enjoy the challenge of a new problem, and that's why I am looking forward to this. And if there weren't problems, they wouldn't need me.

**MR. ACOSTA:** We'll have to leave it there as the final word. I want to thank everybody who took part in today's press conference, and as the Administrator mentioned early on, this will be one of many media opportunities as we move forward.

Thank you, everybody, for your time and have a great day.