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"NASA Update on NASA TV"

MICHAEL GRIFFIN, NASA Administrator

[Moderated by Dean Acosta]

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Good morning or
3 afternoon, depending on where you're sitting. We were
4 talking the other day and decided it was time for another
5 NASA update. We were looking for somebody who would do a
6 good job giving it, and we couldn't find anybody. So we
7 settled on me.

8 Actually, some of the things I wanted to talk
9 about are considerably less humorous even than that. The
10 most important of these I think would be an update on our
11 people and our facilities in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

12 I had the privilege yesterday -- I won't say
13 pleasure -- of being taken down to tour our affected sites,
14 Stennis and Michoud, and, of course, along the way it was
15 impossible not to see 150 miles of devastated coastline,
16 just literally as far as the eye can see where for 2 or 3
17 miles inland from the Gulf Coast there isn't anything
18 standing to speak of. Just unbelievable stuff.

19 You are looking at the external tank, one of the
20 external tanks at Michoud, and if you look carefully, you
21 can see some of the debris on the floor and all that. I
22 had the privilege of touring the facility, but I think what

1 I wanted to say in this case might be even more important
2 than those visual images.

3 One of the things I think we don't realize always
4 is the commitment that our folks in the agency have to the
5 Space program. That was demonstrated last year by the
6 folks at KSC in the wake of the hurricane that went through
7 there, one of three that went through Florida if I recall,
8 and tore up the Vertical Assembly Building and many other
9 assets, and while that was a really big deal, it wasn't
10 comparable quite to what Katrina has done to the Gulf
11 Coast.

12 In particular, the employees at Michoud Assembly
13 Facility, I think it can be said, risked their very lives
14 to stay at Michoud -- 37 of them -- to stay at Michoud, to
15 keep the generators running, to keep the pumps going, and
16 to protect the facilities and the flight hardware that were
17 entrusted to them, and when I tell you that they risked
18 their lives to do it, all you have to do to understand that
19 statement is look anywhere else on the Gulf Coast and look
20 at the consequences of what happened with unprotected land.

21 We were fortunate. The water did not get over
22 the levy into Michoud. There was, of course, an immense

1 amount of flooding, but the pumps were able to handle that.

2 It wouldn't have happened without the people who were
3 staying there, tending to doors that the winds kept trying
4 to blow open and blow rain inside on important hardware and
5 everything that was going on.

6 You can't buy the kind of dedication that I saw
7 down there from our folks for money, for any amount of
8 money. It is not about salary or about holding a job. It
9 is about dedication to the program, and in the
10 question-and-answer session that I participated in when I
11 was down there, what the folks were asking about was is
12 NASA going to stick with us, are they going to close this
13 facility, are we going to keep producing what we do.

14 And of course, I assured them that Michoud is, in
15 fact, unique in the world. There is nowhere else that we
16 can make and assemble the Shuttle external tank system but
17 there, and that we desperately need them, and I tried to
18 convey to them how grateful I was on behalf of NASA and the
19 nation that depends on NASA to do its job for their
20 efforts. It was really quite profound to see it.

21 If you could see what they had done -- [audio
22 break] -- early May, and they have access to running water

1 for one hour in the morning and just recently got access to
2 some fresh clothes. They thanked us for the washer and
3 dryer that we sent down to allow them to wash some of their
4 clothes and have clean ones to put on, and of course, all
5 the food and water has to be helicoptered in because right
6 now there are no dry roads, and until at least one more
7 bridge gets into a moveable condition -- it is a rotating
8 bridge that is locked into position right now, lacking
9 electrical power -- until that gets fixed, there is no
10 water transport in or out.

11 But the good news is the facility itself is in
12 really fine shape, and our flight hardware, one of the
13 tanks has several dings to the insulation. Fortunately, it
14 is on the side that faces away from the Shuttle orbiter,
15 and when we get past the bare survival and back into
16 prospering, people will be looking at that and determining
17 whether that tank is flyable or under what conditions, with
18 what repairs it would be flyable and all of that.

19 But everything, I have to say this is the kind of
20 dedication that we see time after time on occasion after
21 occasion throughout NASA to the Space program, and it is
22 the kind of dedication that simply cannot be bought.

1 People do it because of the love of the program and the
2 love of the mission. This time, it was Michoud's turn to
3 take a bullet for the team, and they went beyond the extra
4 mile.

5 Right now, we're still addressing what the
6 implications are on the Shuttle launch schedule, and if I
7 say I don't know what those are, that's an understatement,
8 but we can talk more about that later.

9 Other things, switching topics completely, next
10 week I am on schedule to brief some of the principal
11 members of the Executive Office of the President -- Jack
12 Marburger, head of OSTP; Josh Bolton, head of Office of
13 Management and Budget; Steve Hadley, National Security
14 Council, and several others -- in connection with our
15 proposed Exploration architecture.

16 I think everybody knows that we have been
17 scrambling all summer long. A core team of folks augmented
18 by 4- or 500 folks around the agency, to include me on some
19 occasions, have been scrambling very hard all summer long
20 to put together NASA's response to the President's
21 challenge in the Vision for Exploration, what will the
22 vehicle look like that will succeed the Space Shuttle when

1 we retire it, what will the architecture for returning to
2 the moon look like, how will it be traceable to Mars, all
3 of those things.

4 I think we have done a pretty good job thrashing
5 that out, and we will be ready to explain it to our
6 stakeholders, in the White House, on the Hill, within all
7 the rest of NASA and, of course, within the contractor
8 community, and that is something that will be taking place
9 over the next few weeks.

10 Nothing is more important in terms of revectoring
11 NASA to get back to an exploration focus, and I think
12 nothing is -- or probably few things are more eagerly
13 anticipated on the part of our 20,000 some NASA folks than
14 that.

15 I would like, of course, to have shared it more
16 broadly earlier on, but the reality is that it is very
17 unfair to the President and his staff to be sharing the
18 results broadly before they have had a chance to see them,
19 and that is what we are doing next week.

20 There will, of course, be material on the web and
21 pictures and all of that after we are done with all of
22 that.

1 Shifting gears again, coming in to be the head of
2 the NASA management team 4-1/2, almost now 5 months ago, we
3 had a lot of problems that have been here for a while, none
4 more pressing than the overall status and readiness of our
5 work force and how we handle all that.

6 We had our Strategic Management Council meeting a
7 little -- a few weeks ago, 3 weeks ago, and I will talk
8 more about that in a minute. We had all of the center
9 directors and mission directors present at that meeting,
10 and we reviewed the information on the table which, as of
11 that point, we did not have task coverage for something
12 close to 2,000 civil servants scattered throughout NASA.

13 Obviously, more of these folks were at what have
14 sometimes been called the "arrow centers," Ames, Glenn, and
15 Langley, but actually, except for a couple of centers, all
16 the centers were having issues, and in addition to the
17 civil service centers, JPL has difficult problems. We care
18 about them all.

19 So we have got a mismatched number in the low
20 thousands between the work we have got and the people to do
21 it. Some of those are skill mix issues. I have said in
22 other fora that we don't have anybody making buggy whips

1 anymore in this country, and there are some things that we
2 have been doing at NASA that fit in the buggy whip
3 category, but in most cases, it has been our perception
4 that we are just not getting the right work to the right
5 folks. So we are trying very hard. We are looking very
6 carefully at in-sourcing.

7 We have a very large number of work that is -- a
8 very large amount of work that is relegated to support
9 contractors. A small fraction of that work I believe can
10 be brought back in-house and assigned to civil servants,
11 and we want to do that with all due process and we will,
12 but the fact is that we need to address that and we are.

13 We will also be looking at, I would say, a final
14 round of buy-outs at some point later in the fall, maybe
15 early in the winter. We have something like 5,000 NASA
16 employees who are within range of retirement who might be
17 able to consider a buy-out. It has been felt that if we
18 went through that one last time that it might net some
19 results.

20 I can't kid folks. We are going to do everything
21 we can to assign real and meaningful work as part of the
22 Exploration effort into centers where that work is needed

1 to begun, but we are not going to get all the way there.
2 There is no illusion I think on anyone's part that we will
3 get all the way there, and there will be folks who are
4 simply no longer needed at NASA.

5 We are entering a development phase, and as much
6 as I have wanted to do it, it will not be possible I think
7 to cover all of the folks who would like to remain with
8 NASA and would like to do NASA work with the money that we
9 have available because a good fraction of that development
10 work for the Crew Exploration Vehicle, the Shuttle
11 successor, and the launch systems to follow and to launch
12 the CEV -- a good fraction of that work will have to be
13 placed with industry, of course, and that is what happens
14 when we develop major systems and that is the phase of life
15 that we are entering into.

16 In order to have the money for all of that within
17 the context of a limited NASA budget, we have had to cut
18 severely the technology budget that had been planned for
19 the next few years, and that directly affects folks at
20 NASA. So we are trying to make the best news out of the
21 story that we can.

22 Inevitably, I think you can look forward to

1 having fewer people on staff at NASA a year from now than
2 there are today, and I think we just need to face up to
3 that, [inaudible] which has been, to the best of my
4 knowledge, kicked down the road, stemming, in fact, back to
5 the last time that I was here at headquarters as chief
6 engineer. It is a problem of very longstanding, and I am
7 determined to deal with it in my tenure and not kick it
8 further down the road.

9 We are also -- for those of you in the field who
10 might be worried about it -- are not exempting headquarters
11 from this kind of scrutiny. We have undertaken an
12 institutional requirements review which includes corporate
13 G&A, corporate service pools, and all of our
14 headquarters-based operations, numerous ones which is the
15 reason why I am referring to some notes to see them.

16 We want to get corporate G&A in guide with OMB
17 guidelines, reduce the total work force at headquarters
18 back in the direction of a thousand people. It seemed to
19 me and to many others here that it is unconscionable to be
20 worried about having the money and the coverage, work
21 coverage, for 2,000 civil servants out in our field centers
22 while at the same time NASA headquarters has grown from a

1 number something like a thousand to something like 1,600 in
2 the last 3 years or so. That seems unacceptable to me.

3 It is a matter of record that during the Apollo
4 era when NASA had 36,000 civil servants working for it and
5 400,000 contractors that somehow all of that was managed
6 with a thousand civil servants here at headquarters. I
7 realize that times have changed and that we have many, many
8 requirements from other parts of Washington, to address
9 laws and regulations that didn't even exist in the Apollo
10 era, but somehow to me the tooth-to-tail ratio here at
11 headquarters relative to the field seems to be out of
12 whack, and we are going to try to do something about it.

13 If nothing else, I think we need to do it to set
14 an example for the lean management style that we are going
15 to have to have if we want to execute the Exploration
16 Vision successfully.

17 In that vein, we have a new addition of NASA
18 Strategic Management handbook which details at a high level
19 how management functions are to be performed at NASA. We
20 and those of us who helped to craft it intend it to be a
21 living document. It is available on the web. You need to
22 look at it, and where you have substantive comments for

1 things that need to change, you need to send those forward
2 because that is what we live by, and we are certainly
3 willing to entertain new and better thoughts, but we can't
4 do that if you don't provide them. We used up all of our
5 thoughts. So any new ones are going to have to come from
6 you.

7 The emphasis in the entire strategic management
8 approach is of lean government, fewer rather than more
9 managers, more rather than fewer people doing the
10 fundamental engineering, technical, and scientific work
11 that NASA is placed here by the American taxpayer to do,
12 which is not to say that I don't understand and appreciate
13 the value of the support functions, but fundamentally, we
14 are placed here to execute a certain kind of technical work
15 on behalf of the nation, and we need to keep that always in
16 mind.

17 So, at the field centers, when we have to look at
18 how we trim and where we trim, let us make every effort to
19 maintain and even extend core competencies because those
20 are what the nation pays us to do.

21 We have a bit of a new organization for the first
22 time since the early 1970's that I can recall. I certainly

1 recall the early '70s. I don't recall this position being
2 used, and that is the position of Associate Administrator,
3 not association administrator for something, but Associate
4 Administrator as part of the Administrator's office and
5 part of a line management team.

6 I have announced in a couple of forums, including
7 a press release, that Rex Geveden, formerly agency chief
8 engineer and formerly deputy director at Marshall Space
9 Flight Center -- Rex is the Associate Administrator for the
10 agency.

11 Rex is in the line. He is not staffed to me.
12 Between myself, Rex the Associate Administrator, Paul
13 Morrell the Chief of Staff, and the Deputy Administrator,
14 the four of us are the people in different venues who
15 really, in the final analysis, run the agency, and a
16 decision on an appropriate topic from any of us is the
17 decision that all of us have made.

18 If we get cross-ways with one another and haven't
19 properly coordinated, I would have to say that that's our
20 problem, and we will fix it if you bring it to our
21 attention, but if you get a decision from Rex, it's the
22 agency's decision.

1 I emphasize that because, although that was the
2 way it was at NASA back -- as far back as the early '70s
3 and throughout the '60s, we have not used that structure
4 for some time, and I have restored it.

5 We have also altered the reporting authority -- I
6 have mentioned this on several occasions, but it is
7 worthwhile to do it again -- that I have regarded the
8 strategic management of the agency, what it is that we do,
9 how we set our priorities, what is important to be done in
10 our world of limited resources, and what is of lesser
11 importance is in my view properly shaped by both the
12 mission directors and the center directors.

13 Center directors take care of our institution and
14 our institutional quality, its ability to do the work we
15 want done. Mission directors take care of programmatic
16 requirements and the money to implement them.

17 There is a healthy tension between those two
18 sides of the engineering matrix, the program side and the
19 institutional side. As long as we work together toward
20 common goals, I think that tension is healthy.

21 I did not believe that there could be that
22 healthy tension when center directors reported to the

1 Administrator through the associate administrators. There
2 is an inevitable grading process that goes on, and the fact
3 that it was required, and so I felt that I did not want
4 that filtering of our center directors' inputs through
5 AA's. So now AA's and center directors report all of them
6 to what we used to call "Code A."

7 As a matter of fact, Rex as Associate
8 Administrator has as his first line of duty working down
9 and into the agency to deal with that healthy tension
10 between institution and program. My first line of duty is
11 the up and out function, and of course, we both split
12 frankly, as does the chief of staff and as does the deputy,
13 but I did not feel that we could execute the day-to-day
14 management functions properly without that Associate
15 Administrator role, given that I wanted the center
16 directors and the mission directors to report in a co-equal
17 fashion to the Administrator's office.

18 Let me will pick up what I had dropped here.

19 Pretty well, a major reason for all that is
20 involved with my concept of what it means to have an
21 independent technical authority in the sense that the
22 Columbia Accident Investigation Board recommended strongly

1 to NASA that we have that.

2 We have taken steps toward crafting an
3 independent technical authority with a system of warrant
4 holders and technical specialists who are system-wide
5 holders and technical warrant holders who are recognized as
6 excellent in what they do, but fundamentally, I think that
7 our independent technical authority has got to come from
8 the appropriate independence between institutional
9 engineering and the engineering decisions which are made in
10 programs; in other words, an independence between core
11 engineering functions and programmatic functions.

12 As long as we have institutional managers down
13 through the engineering and scientific disciplines
14 reporting up through programmatic AA's or what we used to
15 call "program AA's" when I was here previously, as long as
16 we have that reporting function we don't have institutional
17 independence. So I have reorganized to achieve that.

18 We will be taking a look, a very close look, at
19 what we want the independent technical authority
20 organization to be, given this separation of programmatic
21 function from institutional function that we have now put
22 into place. So expect changes in how we do ITA, and expect

1 to see reinforcement on my part of the requirement for
2 absolute nonpareil technical excellence and independence in
3 the engineering institutions that run throughout our NASA
4 centers because that is where our real capability lies.

5 I think with that, I am probably done on what I
6 might loosely refer to as my "prepared remarks," since my
7 remarks are rarely very well prepared, and I am happy to
8 spend the better part of a half an hour from now answering
9 questions.

10 MODERATOR: All right. We are going to take some
11 questions around here at headquarters and around the
12 centers, but before we start that, we have a couple of
13 reminders that I want to share with folks that are
14 listening and watching here on NASA TV.

15 There's a couple of phone numbers that I want to
16 pass on and make sure that we have that information. NASA
17 has a toll-free number for family members seeking
18 additional information about employees at Stennis and
19 Michoud. That number is 877-470-5240, and also for general
20 information about NASA's hurricane recovery efforts, we
21 have recorded updates at 888-362-4323.

22 We have also set up a couple of websites where

1 NASA workers can go for help and information. You can
2 visit www.nasa.gov/eoc, or for some more information on the
3 agency's response to Hurricane Katrina,
4 www.nasa.gov/hurricane.

5 If you didn't get those numbers or addresses, we
6 will also put them at the end of the program here on the
7 NASA update.

8 All right. Let's start off here at headquarters.

9 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Dean, sorry. One thing I
10 forgot to mention before we turn to questions, there is a
11 NASA Family Assistance Donation button, if you will, on our
12 website that you can easily get to, and I would urge any of
13 you who have the financial wherewithal to donate to the
14 NASA families, the victims of this hurricane, to do so.

15 I am not sure that I added that we will add now
16 that when I visited Michoud yesterday, we took an informal
17 poll of the workers there, both NASA and contractor work
18 force by the way, and asked them how many of them had homes
19 to go back to once they could get off the island, and about
20 40 percent of the folks there had no place to go. They
21 have no place to go, and yet their first thoughts after
22 making sure their families had been evacuated to safety --

1 their first thoughts for what they had to do, to take care
2 of our hardware in our facilities.

3 MODERATOR: Mike said you can go to the website.
4 That is at www.nasa.gov, and there is also a link to go to
5 Red Cross and other areas that you can contribute if that
6 is what you choose to do.

7 Okay. Let's start off with some questions here
8 at Headquarters, and then we will go around the centers.
9 We have got one up front here.

10 QUESTIONER: Yes, sir. How has Katrina affected
11 the Shuttle program, and is it also true that we are not
12 launching again until the fall of '06?

13 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Well, let's see. First
14 question first. What we are trying to figure out is how
15 Katrina has affected the Shuttle program. If you talk to
16 the folks at Michoud, they are ready to get busy taking
17 care of any tank damage that was done, and they want to be
18 back in production in a few weeks. And they are very
19 proactive that they are going to be ready.

20 Their focus was on -- [audio break] --
21 fundamentally an internal memo or e-mail from Wayne Hale,
22 Shuttle acting program manager, had gotten out to the media

1 and carried an October date or a not-earlier-than-October.

2 I chatted this morning with Bill Gerstenmaier
3 who, of course, is the head of Space Ops. Bill said that
4 was Wayne's assessment at a particularly dark moment last
5 week, and we are already off that date. The reality is
6 that that date just doesn't have any particular currency in
7 our planning horizon.

8 I want to run and I am trying very hard to run an
9 open agency here, and I would rather deal as we are doing
10 now with this question. I would rather deal with the
11 collateral damage that is associated with being open than
12 to behave in a manner which is clothed and secretive, and
13 so not much that we do here at NASA is or can be kept
14 secret, but it is equally true that while we are trying to
15 figure out what to do, lots of dates get floated around.
16 Until we actually caucus as a management team and figure
17 out what our constraints are, we don't have a date, except
18 that right now Bill and I think it is somewhat earlier than
19 October, and we will let you know when we can.

20 I know this. I am expecting from all of NASA --
21 I am expecting from all of NASA and from the Shuttle
22 program the kind of dedication to moving with all

1 deliberate speed carefully and conservatively, but with
2 concentrated and focused effort toward the next Shuttle
3 launch. I am expecting to see the same kind of dedication
4 out of the folks who aren't at Michoud as those who are,
5 and if we do that, then the date will be what it is. We
6 will always go with what the technical facts tell us. We
7 will always go with what the facts tell us.

8 Right now, we are trying to gather those facts,
9 and when people publish dates like October or frankly any
10 other date, it has no cache with me because we just don't
11 know enough yet.

12 That is probably more answer than you were
13 looking for, but I felt it necessary to supply that.

14 MODERATOR: Good information.

15 All right. Do we have any other questions here?

16 Yes. We have a gentleman up here.

17 QUESTIONER: Thank you.

18 With the effort that we have in down-slash-right
19 sizing of a work force, what are we doing to bring in new
20 people into the agency, question mark?

21 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Well, I right now can't
22 focus on bringing new people into the agency precisely

1 because -- except in special cases -- precisely because we
2 have such a gap between folks who are assigned to
3 particular tasks and the overall agency [inaudible] level,
4 and I think if I exacerbate the problem by bringing in a
5 lot of new folks right now, even though from a skill mix
6 point of view we may really want that, I am violating the
7 first rule which is, when you are in a hole, stop digging.

8 We are in a hole. We have been for a long time,
9 and we need to deal with it. Hopefully -- "hopefully" is
10 not the right word to use in this context. I strongly
11 believe that within the next year or so, we will turn the
12 corner on matching up the work force to the skill
13 requirements, and we will be able to bring in new people,
14 but right today, we are sure not bringing in a lot of new
15 people at NASA. I am sorry about that. I am, but that is
16 the way it is.

17 MODERATOR: All right. Let's take one more
18 question here at headquarters, and then we are going to go
19 to Kennedy right after that. Is there another question
20 here?

21 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: I can't see them, Dean.

22 MODERATOR: All right. We are going to go ahead

1 and go to Kennedy first, and so let's start off with a
2 question from Kennedy.

3 QUESTIONER: Mike, this is Mike [inaudible].

4 First, I want to say the folks here at Florida
5 have a strong empathy for those at Michoud and Stennis, and
6 our hearts and prayers go out to them.

7 It appears that the facilities at MAF can be
8 repaired and brought back to operational status, and of
9 course, we welcome those employees displaced by Katrina at
10 the different centers in KSC.

11 Would the agency consider moving the MAF
12 requirements and work force to KSC more on maybe a
13 permanent basis to mitigate any potential design
14 constraints for maybe the following vehicle and to move
15 toward a more lean operation?

16 I know you kind of addressed this a little bit
17 previously in terms of not keeping MAF there for Shuttle
18 ops, but maybe for the following.

19 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Well, there are some
20 really unique facilities down there. So your question is a
21 deep one to which I can't give you a snap answer.

22 Right now, that is not where we are going. Our

1 facilities at MAF were barely damaged, very light damage to
2 be honest with you. The facilities were horribly damaged
3 in 1965 after Hurricane Betsy, which I well remember, but
4 because it was in 1965 in the middle of the Apollo program,
5 a huge effort was expended to get the facility back on line
6 and they did so, and improvements were made at that time,
7 the efficacy of which stood out in the wake of Katrina
8 because, as I say, thanks to the dedication of our folks
9 and also due to the design, the facility was largely
10 undamaged.

11 So I have to then ask the question of, well, if
12 it made it through Katrina, why would I move it. That is
13 not a cheap thing to do or something done lightly. At the
14 same time, I am not going to foreclose any options and will
15 think carefully about that, but it would require a very
16 careful set of thoughts before we would agree to do that.

17 MODERATOR: All right. Let's go to Marshall with
18 a question.

19 QUESTIONER: Yes. This is Marshall.

20 How will you support the Stennis and MAF
21 employees getting them back to relocating and back to some
22 type of normal life here at --

1 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: I sense you are being
2 bothered by the echo.

3 There are a number of things we are doing, trying
4 to do, planning to do, to support folks at Stennis and MAF
5 who have been left homeless. We are considering making
6 trailers available to people to live in, in the short term,
7 while they figure out where and how they are going to
8 rebuild.

9 We are temporarily relocating people who can be
10 relocated to other centers and provided with a work station
11 there. We have today the kind of electronic communication
12 that permits that to be done in ways that were not even
13 remotely possible in 1965, the last time that Michoud went
14 through a hurricane like this. So we are doing those
15 things and a lot more.

16 The guy we have put in charge of overall disaster
17 relief on the Hurricane Katrina is Bill Parsons who until
18 very recently was Shuttle program director. Through their
19 Return to Flight, Bill did, of course, an excellent job
20 there. Bill is a former center director at Stennis Space
21 Center, and we shortly will be asking Bill to go back home
22 and take back his title. Right now, he wouldn't have a

1 home to go back to if we sent him there. So he is
2 coordinating all of the emergency relief functions. The
3 ideas that I just mentioned plus many others are being
4 considered in that vein.

5 MODERATOR: All right. We are going to come back
6 here. I have a question that was given to me. It came
7 from Jonathan.

8 Has the Office of Personnel Management given you
9 any specific direction on how employees at affected centers
10 will be treated? Will they continue to receive pay and
11 benefits even if they are off the job for extended periods
12 of time?

13 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: I have not had any
14 guidance as yet from OPM, and we are doing everything we
15 can to make sure that folks do receive pay and benefits.
16 We understand the issues there.

17 MODERATOR: Okay. I believe we have a question
18 at Ames or a statement.

19 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: I believe you may have
20 been wrong.

21 MODERATOR: Could be. Wouldn't be the first
22 time.

1 Okay. Let's go back to headquarters and see if
2 there's any questions here. Anybody?

3 [No response.]

4 MODERATOR: Well, that's fine because I've got a
5 list of questions that I've been given to ask you.
6 Apparently, they don't want to stand up and ask.

7 How has the storm changed the way you are
8 approaching the current budget cycle? Do you have to start
9 over because of the storm?

10 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: We certainly cannot start
11 the budget cycle over. Our submission to OMB is due on the
12 12th of September, and starting over is not an option.

13 There will be a hurricane relief supplemental,
14 and NASA will be making inputs into that supplemental.
15 NASA was among the most heavily impacted of Federal
16 agencies, but our planning, our replanning will have to be
17 done on the fly. There just simply is not time to start
18 the budget cycle over.

19 I am surprised that folks are reluctant to ask
20 questions and write it down on a list. I am a very
21 user-friendly administrator.

22 MODERATOR: We know that. They want the

1 messenger to be killed, not anybody else.

2 [Laughter.]

3 MODERATOR: Okay. I think we have a follow-up in
4 Marshall. They wanted to ask another question.

5 QUESTIONER: Yes, sir. You mentioned that the
6 briefings will be held with the administration on the
7 roll-out of the architecture plan. When can you identify
8 that will be discussed with the centers after that?

9 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Within the next few
10 weeks. Certainly, the whole latter part of September will
11 be devoted to that sort of thing.

12 MODERATOR: All right. Now I think we are going
13 back to Ames. We didn't get them before, but I think we
14 are going to Ames now.

15 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Now, that is just kind of
16 comical because it was Ames that supplied communications
17 satellite relay infrastructure to MAF in order to allow
18 them to be able to talk to the outside world.

19 MODERATOR: Well, that explains it. That's why I
20 can't talk to Ames.

21 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: They sent it all to
22 Michoud, and they don't have any to talk to us.

1 MODERATOR: Yeah, that's the case.

2 QUESTIONER: This is Phil Schneider [ph] out at
3 Ames. I hope you are copying me now.

4 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Got you.

5 QUESTIONER: All right. Good. After that setup,
6 I feel a little embarrassed here. We did have some of that
7 trouble.

8 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: You did well where it
9 counted, and you are five by five right now.

10 QUESTIONER: All right. Very good.

11 I am deputy director for Emergency Services out
12 here at Ames, and I have also been acting as the director
13 of our Ames Emergency Operations Center for this situation.

14 I thought partly for your benefit, Mike, and also
15 to help inform our community out here at Ames, I would like
16 to share at least some highlights of some of the stuff we
17 have done to contribute to the response because, I'll tell
18 you, a lot of the community out here has really been
19 looking for any way that they can to help, and I just want
20 to give them every avenue to let them know what we have
21 been doing out here.

22 I hope you will indulge me for a second here, but

1 we have had the Ames Emergency Operations Center activated
2 since immediately after the devastation was apparent here,
3 and we have helped out basically wherever it was possible,
4 wherever it was needed at both the NASA facilities and also
5 through FEMA through some preexisting agreements that we
6 have, and just some highlights here for our folks to
7 understand, out at Stennis we actually have right now en
8 route driving across country a potable water purification
9 system.

10 Potable water is something that they have been
11 paying attention to both at Stennis and Michoud, and we are
12 getting a water purification system with some technicians
13 out there right now to try to keep that supply where they
14 need it.

15 Also at Michoud, you just mentioned the
16 communications out there were provided by our emergency
17 communications capability using a KU band satellite, got
18 them up with network connectivity to connect to the outside
19 world, got them the voice-over-IP telephones, and just
20 recently also some video conferencing capability.

21 Also, our director of Emergency Services, Bob
22 Dolci has been working with Bill Parsons and sort of doing

1 whatever he can to help advise back there. So he has also
2 traveled out there.

3 Also, Ames has an agreement with one of FEMA's
4 Urban Search and Rescue Teams, which are 28 in the nation.

5 I think the day after the disaster, we sent out one of our
6 water rescue specialists out with a 14-person team with
7 them, and over the time since they have been deployed, they
8 have made hundreds of rescues of people in the affected
9 area, including recently down in the New Orleans area.
10 They have been boating up the streets pulling people out.

11 The day after, the full 70-person Urban Search
12 and Rescue capability of California Task Force 3 was sent
13 out, and Ames was able to get 7 of our people helping out
14 there in jobs ranging from rescue specialists, search
15 specialists, logistics specialists, and hazardous materials
16 specialists. So we have been helping a lot, and I hope our
17 Ames people are aware of that. I know that they are
18 looking for every way to help, and we have been trying to
19 help out in any way we can. And that's it.

20 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Well, thanks. I
21 appreciate the contribution.

22 I do not, however, want to use that as a kickoff

1 for every center to go through what they have been doing to
2 help out or we won't finish, but thank you.

3 Other questions?

4 MODERATOR: Absolutely. There is a list of
5 centers that have contributed, so we appreciate all the
6 help out there.

7 Let's go to California and go to JPL that has a
8 question.

9 QUESTIONER: Did you get a chance to visit
10 Stennis, and what did you see there?

11 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: I did. I saw both
12 Stennis and Michoud, and obviously, both were beaten up
13 pretty well when you just sort of look around, lots of
14 trees down, the occasional power line or telephone pole or
15 something like that. The roof was off at a couple -- or
16 pieces of the roof were off at a couple of buildings at
17 Michoud and one or two that I saw at Stennis, but as I say,
18 by and large, our facilities came through quite well,
19 amazingly well. So that once the basic utility functions,
20 power and water and transportation in and out -- power,
21 water, communications, and transportation, once those are
22 restored, I think our institutions will be able to get back

1 on line pretty quickly doing what they have been asked to
2 do.

3 QUESTIONER: This is Colleen Sharkey [ph] from
4 JPL, and I wanted to know if there is any way for us to do
5 in-kind donations or volunteer our time through the agency.

6 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: I do not know the answer
7 to that question.

8 Dean, do we have anything set up already, or
9 should we just take that under advisement?

10 MODERATOR: We will take that under advisement,
11 and we will get back. We will certainly give that
12 information out as soon as we get it.

13 Let's go to Glenn, I believe is our last question
14 at the centers. Glenn?

15 QUESTIONER: We were just curious. Since NASA is
16 known for its expertise in building structures that
17 withstand the harshness of space, are we being asked to
18 help rebuild the infrastructures of those cities that are
19 affected by Katrina?

20 Thank you.

21 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: No, we're not.

22 Most of us -- there are a few of us in NASA who

1 are civil engineers, but by and large, that is not our
2 specialty and it is not our mission. I think the nation is
3 best served if we tend to our knitting and try to take care
4 of our own, and at this time, our goal should be to do our
5 job while being the least possible drain on recovery forces
6 that are needed for other places as possible.

7 MODERATOR: All right. I have a couple more
8 questions to pass along. I am just strictly the messenger
9 here, too.

10 We have heard about the need for financial
11 assistance. Are there any other material items NASA needs
12 to collect for its displaced employees?

13 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Again, I am the wrong
14 guy. I don't know the answer to that. That is a good
15 question. We can get it onto our website.

16 MODERATOR: Yes. It is actually on our website.
17 If you go to www.nasa.gov/eoc, you will get some
18 information on that particular subject.

19 Okay. One last question. Last year, a hurricane
20 swept through the Kennedy area, and now you have Katrina at
21 Stennis and Michoud. Given the strains on the Federal
22 budget caused by the Iraq War and the storm's damage, have

1 you been given any commitment from the White House that we
2 will continue to push forward with the Vision?

3 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Well, I haven't been told
4 that we won't, I guess is the way that I would put it.

5 Of course, will push forward because we have our
6 direction, and it has not been changed. NASA is expected
7 to execute its mission whether we have hurricanes or don't,
8 and when we have hurricanes as we inevitably will, we will
9 recover from them as we are doing now.

10 The President, the rest of the administration,
11 the Congress frankly have -- I mean, I love the Space
12 program, as we all do, and it is the most important thing
13 to me, but as a nation right now, this is the worst natural
14 disaster we have ever suffered, and the amount of damage is
15 variously estimated to be at many tens of billions of
16 dollars. Yesterday morning, I saw a \$35-billion estimate.

17 It may be higher by now. That is twice our annual budget,
18 the amount of damage cause in a day or two of a hurricane.

19 So we are the tail on the dog. We are not the
20 dog, and to expect the administration and the Congress to
21 be paying a lot of attention to NASA right now I think
22 misunderstands severely the nation's proper allocation of

1 priorities.

2 The best thing we can do for the nation is to
3 take care of our own folks, take care of our own
4 facilities, and stay busy with what it is that our job is.

5 MODERATOR: Good point.

6 All right. Are there any last questions here at
7 headquarters? Otherwise, I am going to hand it over to
8 Mike for a closing statement, and we will wrap up the NASA
9 update.

10 ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Well, as usual, I don't
11 have any closing statement. So, if we're done, then I'm
12 done. Thanks for your time and attention, and let's get
13 back to work.

14 [Applause.]

15 [End of NASA update.]

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