

**Remarks of  
NASA Deputy Administrator Shana Dale  
NASA Media Briefing  
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We are very concerned about the tragic situation involving astronaut Lisa Nowak and are deeply concerned about the safety and well-being of Lisa, Air Force Captain Colleen Shipman, and Astronaut Bill Oefelein. This is, of course, a personal and legal matter -- and NASA is, therefore, limited in its involvement and ability to discuss many of the details.

However, we know there are a number of questions about NASA policies and procedures, and we would like to address those today, to the extent that we can.

First, we can tell you that Lisa Nowak, who had been scheduled for duties related to the upcoming shuttle mission, has been removed from flight status. She also is on 30-day leave. She has been released from police custody in Orlando, and is now back in Houston, where she lives.

Her activities with NASA in Houston today are confidential personnel matters that we cannot discuss, and we appreciate your understanding and cooperation on this.

As you know, Lisa was a member of the crew of STS-121, which flew this past July. Her performance as a member of that crew was excellent. She took part in a number of post-flight activities with other members of the crew following their return. These included appearances at sporting events, conventions, and visits to other NASA centers and contractor sites.

There also have been questions about the status of astronaut Bill Oefelein, who last flew on STS-116 in December, as the pilot on that mission. He remains on flight status in the NASA Astronaut Office.

Senior management at the Johnson Space Center, where the astronauts are based, received word early Monday that astronaut Lisa Nowak had been arrested in Orlando and was in custody. NASA management had few further details at that time, and dispatched the chief of the Astronaut Office, Steve Lindsay, to Orlando to look into the situation and offer any appropriate assistance. Lindsay made the trip on a government aircraft, a NASA T-38 training jet, at the discretion of NASA management, to expedite his arrival and NASA's ability to assess the situation.

Steve Lindsay attended the court hearings associated with the case in Orlando. Lisa returned to Houston on a commercial flight this morning, after her release, accompanied on that commercial flight by Steve Lindsey.

We do not know where the facts and circumstances of this case will lead. We will continue to monitor and assess the situation, and NASA will do whatever is appropriate in this case and fully cooperate with the authorities.

There are several general procedural questions we would like to address.

One question relates to psychological testing of astronauts, clearing them for flight, and assessing their mental health following their flights. All astronauts are subjected to extensive medical and psychological testing in order to be admitted to the astronaut corps. In addition to regular health checkups throughout their time of service to NASA, astronauts receive extensive medical examinations prior to each flight.

While there is no specific, separate psychological examination for a shuttle flight, NASA health care providers are experienced in all aspects of health care, including behavioral health, and they certainly look for any potential issues or problems. More extensive psychological examinations are required for long-duration flights, such as an extended mission on the space station. Astronauts also undergo extensive medical examinations when they return from space.

I heard few details on the situation until Monday evening. On Tuesday morning, the administrator of NASA, Mike Griffin, gave direction to Mike Coats, director of the Johnson Space Center, to do the following:

(1) Initiate a review of existing psychological screening for admittance into the astronaut corps, and a review of the nature and extent to which we do ongoing psychological assessments during an astronaut's career at NASA. Issues to be addressed include: who conducts the screening, what are the professional criteria necessary to conduct the screening, how often and in what manner are astronauts psychologically evaluated throughout their careers, and, if concerns are raised during any evaluation, how are those concerns adjudicated?

(2) In light of the current, situation, determine whether there were there any areas of concern -- any leading indicators we might have pickup on, based on Lisa Nowak's dealings with other astronauts or NASA employees, between the time she was detailed to us from the Navy and the present.

(3) From those who participate in this review, discern any recommended changes to existing procedures or practices, and whether there are lessons to be learned that need to be incorporated into future practices.

Today, Mike Griffin has asked Chief Medical Officer Rich Williams to lead a review of our medical and psychological screening and follow-on health care procedures to determine whether any modifications would be advisable, to ensure that our astronauts have the level of psychological and medical care and attention they need.

Other questions have related to any codes of conduct NASA has for astronauts or other employees. There are no specific behavior regulations for astronauts, either on or off duty, beyond the basic expectations for employees of any government agency. Members of the military such as Lisa Nowak, who is on active duty with the Navy and is working “on detail” to NASA, are subject to the rules and regulations of their branch of the military service. We would refer you to the Navy for any specific codes of conduct they might have.

This is a very difficult time for many people, and it is a very tragic event. We appreciate your concern and interest. We will now answer your questions as best we can.