NASA PRESS BRIEFING

Speakers:

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MICHAEL COATS, Director, Johnson Space Center
HAROLD HURTT, Police Chief, Houston Police Department
LIEUTENANT LARRY BAINBRIDGE, Houston Police Department
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[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM A WEBCAST RECORDING.]
PROCEEDINGS

MODERATOR: We will have brief opening statements, and then we will go to questions. We will need to limit those just a bit in the interest of time.

So, Mike, would you like to start?

ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Thank you, Eileen.

We are here today for a very unfortunate and unpleasant reason. Yesterday, we lost a valued member of the NASA team, a long-time, very highly regarded engineer, David Beverly, a man who was married to his junior high school sweetheart and whose mission in life was to make NASA the best agency that he could.

He got up to go to work yesterday morning, never imagining that it was going to be his last day to do so, and we are here to talk to you about it, answer the questions that we can, but I would like you to keep in mind what I just said about who we lost.

Thank you.

MR. COATS: Okay. Let me make a few points here before we turn it over to the Chief.

Yesterday events remind us that tragedy can touch us at any moment, and we really can never truly guarantee
and protect ourselves.

I am extremely proud of how David Beverly and Fran Crenshaw reacted yesterday. Even after being wounded, David attempted to barricade the office in an attempt to protect himself and Fran from further injury, and he died in that attempt.

Fran's behavior was nothing short of heroic during the hours that she was a hostage. She was amazingly composed and calm and has been able to provide the Houston Police Department with good information on how the events exactly unfolded yesterday.

Today, the NASA team is pulling together to comfort those in need and begin the process of healing. We have met with Fran. Mike and I went out and met with both Fran Crenshaw and previous to that with Linda Beverly this morning, and our NASA team and our NASA family is providing them with as much support as they need. David and Fran and their families deserve our respect and admiration for the courage that they have demonstrated.

I want to say I got some questions last night. I do want to say that while our jobs are often demanding, they are jobs that we have chosen because we believe in
what we do, and we believe it is important to the country.

Speaking for Mike and myself, we take the welfare and safety of our employees very seriously, and as part of the family here at NASA, we do try to watch out for each other. We are committed to ensuring as safe a work environment as possible out here. We will be looking at yesterday's events to see if we can improve the security for our employees out here, but I do want to commend our Johnson Space Center security forces as well as the Houston Police Department, the Constable's Office, the FBI, and several other organizations that just worked so smoothly together. They were very well coordinated, and I was very impressed with the professionalism of everybody involved.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Chief Hurtt?

CHIEF HURTT: Thank you.

Yesterday, a troubled Jacobs Engineering contract employee for NASA took the life of a NASA civil servant, held another colleague hostage, before taking his own life. Today, we are going to be informing the community how this incident unfolded.

In the days to come, we hope that the facts
gathered as a part of our investigation will lead all of us toward a better understanding as to why these types of incidents occur and how future tragedies can be prevented.

As we outlined yesterday's tragic events, two things will become very, I think, immediate apparent to you. First, this unprecedented act of violence at the Johnson Space Center was quickly and efficiently contained and controlled by NASA's security forces and law enforcement personnel. Coordination, cooperation, and team work kept the incident contained without greater loss of life to other employees or to law enforcement officials.

Second and more importantly, we saw two ordinary people confronted with a nightmare-type situation and responded in a heroic manner. Mr. David Beverly and Ms. Fran Crenshaw are the names to be remembered and celebrated as testaments to grace under fire.

At present, we have determined that Mr. Beverly was a career NASA civil servant in charge of quality assurance issues. He had reported job performance deficiencies associated with the suspect in this incident.

On March 16, 2007, an e-mail was created and sent to the suspect describing his performance deficiencies and
set out a plan of improvement. The suspect printed out the
e-mail on March 18th, the same day the suspect purchased a
five-shot Smith & Wesson revolver and 20 rounds of
hollow-point ammunition.

The subject blamed Mr. Beverly for being
responsible for his negative job performance situation. So
yesterday at approximately 1:30 p.m., the suspect entered
the office suite housing Mr. Beverly and Ms. Crenshaw with
a gun purchased in March. He was holding it in his left
hand.

Ms. Crenshaw reported that Mr. Beverly spoke in a
calm, soothing manner offering a number of options for job
improvements including a transfer with the individual as
they talked about the situation. The two talked for
several minutes before the suspect raised his weapon and
shot Mr. Beverly two times, once in the right leg and again
in the chest.

The suspect exited the office suite for a few
seconds, allowing Mr. Beverly to move to protect himself
and Ms. Crenshaw. Despite being critically wounded, Mr.
Beverly attempted to block the suspect from reentering the
office by pushing his desk against the door.
Unfortunately, the suspect was able to take advantage of Mr. Beverly's weakened state and forced his way back into the office, again firing at Mr. Beverly, shooting him more times. Mr. Beverly fell mortally wounded.

The suspect then barred the door to the office suite, taking Ms. Crenshaw as a hostage. Ms. Crenshaw was taken to the far corner office bound by wrists and arms with duct tape. Ms. Crenshaw remained a captive until the suspect took his own life.

During her captivity, Ms. Crenshaw was able to talk with the suspect. She maintained her composure throughout the entire ordeal.

The message I hope comes from this horrific incident is one of courage. NASA has a long condition of courage, ingenuity, and strength. The strength by two NASA employees was demonstrated yesterday.

The team work philosophy at work every day in the Space Program was also evident. HPD, combined with the Johnson Space Center Security, the FBI, Precinct 8 Deputy Constable Sandlin, and ATF agents all contributed to the containment and the resolution of this incident.

We have learned one thing at this point. It is
that heroes just don't fly in space. Sometimes heroes work in the next cubicle to you.

Now I will ask Lieutenant Baimbridge to provide a detailed timeline of the events as they occurred yesterday.

LIEUTENANT BAIMBRIDGE: I am going to run through the timeline, as Chief said, and going back to March the 16th, a little over a month ago, the suspect received an e-mail from his supervisor at Jacobs Engineering regarding his work performance. A copy of this e-mail, hard copy of this e-mail was found yesterday in his lunch bag, which was left on his desk.

On March the 18th, 2007, the suspect purchased the Smith & Wesson .38 special revolver, and then yesterday, April the 20th, the suspect had lunch with Dave Beverly as well as another male. The other male stated that there was no -- nothing seemed out of the ordinary, except perhaps for the suspect's slight unusual demeanor, aside from his normal demeanor, which has also been described as quite odd.

Approximately 1:33 p.m., yesterday, the suspect entered the office of Mr. Beverly. Ms. Crenshaw had been in Mr. Beverly's office talking with him. The suspect held
a gun in his hand and stated, "You are the one that is
going to get me fired."

Mr. Beverly spoke with the suspect in a very calm
manner and attempted to try to calm him down, all the while
the suspect held the gun in his hand.

After several minutes of talking with Mr. Beverly, the suspect shot him twice. He then left the
office and returned a short time later and shot him two
more times.

At 1:37 p.m., JSC dispatch received a "man with a
gun" call at Building No. 44. They also had a secure alarm
sounded, which meant that a secured door had been opened.

At approximately 1:43 p.m., all JSC security
arrived on the scene, and they secured the building and
helped to evacuate those inside.

Upon arrival at the scene, they found that two
other individuals had barricaded themselves in their
offices, which they escorted out to safety.

Several people that exited the building stated
that they had seen a man with a revolver upstairs. HPD and
HP SWAT were called out to the scene. Between the hours of
2:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m., Special Agent Richard Hewitt with
JSC made several attempts to contact the suspect via the telephone in Ms. Crenshaw's office. The suspect answered the phone, but never made any statements to him.

During this time, the suspect called from that same phone to Mr. Hewitt, seeing the Caller-ID and where he was calling from, but never made any statement to him.

At approximately 4:28 p.m., a gunshot was heard by SWAT members who were inside Building No. 44. At 4:30 p.m., the decision was made to breach the door into the office where the hostage was being held. Once inside, they found that the complainant, Mr. Beverly, was deceased, and they also found that the suspect had been shot in the head by himself. The hostage, Ms. Crenshaw, who was taped up, was quickly removed and taken to a safe place where she received medical treatment.

I also want to note that according to Ms. Crenshaw during this incident, the suspect was watching everything unfold on television.

And I state this because he was watching as for the deployment of SWAT and other equipment, which I think it is important to note why we are careful about trying to keep the media back at times, as he was able to get some
intel from this. I know the decision was made at some point during this to cut the feed, to prevent any other information getting out that shouldn't be.

Finally, the suspect told Ms. Crenshaw that he was taping her mouth shut in an effort to prevent her from screaming once he shot himself. His statement to her was basically that he did not want her to scream and then the police to rush in and save his life. His fear was that he would end up in jail, and he didn't want to go there. It was obvious from his intent initially that he went there with the intent to kill himself as well as Mr. Beverly.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

MR. MILLER: We are profoundly saddened by this event. We mourn the loss of Mr. Beverly and the trauma suffered by Ms. Crenshaw and now the trauma suffered by their families.

Since the incident yesterday, we have been working with NASA. The first thing we did was locate all of our employees that had evacuated Building 44, and since then, we have been counseling our employees, talking to them, and setting up our Employee Assistance Program folks
to come and talk to them.

    We will continue to do that until this crisis is over and we return to what might be considered normal operations.

MODERATOR: Thank you all.

    We are going to go to questions. I will ask that you right now -- just one question per person for right now. We are limited. We will need to be finishing this up. If you have questions specifically for Mike Griffin, I would suggest you ask those first.

REPORTER: Rasha Madkour with AP.

    Can you talk a little bit about what you will be reviewing with the security measures and what you think this event will bring around?

MODERATOR: Who is this question for?

REPORTER: Mr. Griffin.

ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Well, as Chief Hurtt pointed out this morning, in any sort of incident like this or of many other kinds, even though the initial impression was that everybody who participated handled themselves just about as well as could be done, there are always lessons to be learned, and those lessons may save another life later
on, and if there is such a lesson out there, we want to find it.

So we will be conducting a top-down review of the whole incident, and we will tell you how it comes out.

REPORTER: As a follow-up, Mr. Griffin -- Susan Roesgen with CNN -- are you considering having metal detectors inside the buildings themselves here at Johnson Space Center?

ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Well, I am not saying that anything is off the table or on the table. We will consider all of that.

But I would again point out what has been said by others, that when an employee badged onto a center or into a building of any kind who is allowed to come into that building has decided that he wishes to avenge a grudge or not and is willing to die in the process, that it is essentially impossible to stop such a person.

We see that in the Mideast on a nearly daily basis, unfortunately. We saw it on September 11th of 2001. I regret to say that I suspect we will see more of it.

That was what we had yesterday.

This individual came in, as you have heard from
Lieutenant Baimbridge's statements, determined that at the end of it, he was going to die, and before he did, he wanted to satisfy a grudge.

MODERATOR: Gina?

REPORTER: Gina Sunceri, ABC News, for Michael Coast.

Michael, what message are you sending to the other employees here? What are you telling them about this, and what do you want them to know?

MR. COATS: Well, what we are trying to get out -- first of all, I learned, because I lived in Littleton when they had the Columbine massacre, that it is very important for people to have the opportunity to talk about their concerns and their fears. If they have concerns about security in the workplace, it is important to talk about that and answer their questions and try to reassure them. It is really a matter of informing them.

We will inform them of all the details that we have on this incident. We will inform them about everything we are doing in the way of reviewing our security, again, which we just did after the Virginia Tech shootings, but it is important to, first of all, inform the
employees and then give them an opportunity to voice their fears and concerns, if you will.

MODERATOR: Mark Carreau.

REPORTER: Mark Carreau with the Houston Chronicle.

Do you have a set procedure, either NASA or contractor, for counseling an employee in matters of job performance, as you have described this, and if so, was that procedure followed? And if not, is that a lapse that you will be looking into in this regard?

MR. COATS: Well, let me refer that to Lon.

MR. MILLER: The answer, was our procedure followed, is yes. This had not reached the point of formal disciplinary action. We were aware of some poor performance on this employee's part, mainly involving schedule performance. His technical work was regarded fairly highly, but we did get some feedback that he wasn't showing up at meetings on time, and work was having to be picked up by others.

So our immediate supervisors counseled him, gave him an eight-step plan. They wanted to see some improvement in these specific areas of performance, and
that was several weeks ago. He complied with one of those
actions and did submit documentation to confirm that, but
did not provide any feedback on the other seven.

In our process then, at that point, we would then
consider more formal disciplinary action that could lead up
to termination, but with this employee, we had not gotten
that far, and there was no discussion as to what
disciplinary action, if any, would be taken. It was still
at the supervisory level.

MODERATOR: We will come back once again.

REPORTER: Mr. Griffin, this is Susan Roesgen
again with CNN. I just feel compelled to ask you a little
bit more about this. If this guy with the gun had been in
your Mission Control Center and had been in the Operations
Room -- you know, you tried to bring back a crew from the
Space Station yesterday -- it wouldn't have just been a
grudge that would have been solved. Some more innocent
lives and a very serious project in this Federal facility
could have been affected. I am really curious as to why
metal detectors aren't in the buildings or searching for
weapons inside cars are not done routinely.

ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Well, we will be
reviewing all of that, but citizens do have rights against unreasonable search and seizure. We have to respect those rights. We can't detain or stop people merely because they happen to be, in the opinions of some others, acting oddly.

We will be considering all of the issues involved and what steps we may take and what steps we may not take.

MR. COATS: I would like to point out, since you raised that example, we do have metal detectors in our control centers here, but as far as searching cars, we would literally have to dismantle every car as they came in every day, and with 10,000 employees, that is probably not realistic.

REPORTER: Michelle Kofus [ph] with the local Fox.

I believe this will be for Mr. Miller. To your knowledge, has anyone who worked with Phillips ever expressed concern about his demeanor, how he treated people?

MR. MILLER: No, nothing in particular. He was regarded as a quiet employee, somewhat reclusive.

There were discussions, technical discussions at times over differences of opinion, but there was nothing
outstanding in his demeanor or actions in the recent past
that would indicate he was considering anything of this
nature.

REPORTER: Rasha with AP again.

Could you explain what the relationship was with
Mr. Beverly and the suspect, why he might have blamed Mr.
Beverly for his job performance?

Thank you.

MR. COATS: Again, Mr. Beverly -- David was a
NASA employee. He had responsibility for what we called
"Triple E Parts" and was considered an expert professional
in that field. In fact, he was supposed to be on his way
to a conference this week to give a presentation.

Mr. Phillips was a quality assurance inspector.
So that was their relationship. They were not supervisor
relationship, but they certainly worked with each other on
a regular basis.

REPORTER: Yes. For Chief Hurtt, Melissa Jacobs,
Fox News Channel.

Any more updates on the note that was scribbled
on the board?

CHIEF HURTT: I will defer to Chief King or
Lieutenant Baimbridge on that.

LIEUTENANT BAIMBRIDGE: There were several notes that were left, handwritten notes. During the whole hostage situation, Ms. Crenshaw stated he was writing these during the hours that he kept her hostage.

Basically, he made some statements that, "He kept calling me stupid," quote, referring to Mr. Beverly. However, talking to Ms. Crenshaw, there was never any time that she heard him call him "stupid." We haven't found anyone that ever heard Mr. Beverly call him stupid.

He also left some other information, contact information for next of kin, that sort of thing, but basically, it was a rambling about people calling him "stupid."

REPORTER: Mark Carreau for the Houston Chronicle.

I have a related set of questions. Sometimes in personnel actions when you are counseling an employee and you think they may be troubled, especially when they have to make a security pass, the security personnel have a photograph, and that triggers a search, a random search maybe, but this time you search this guy.
Do you guys know how he carried this guy in yet, and did security forces have any reason to have photos or anything that would sort of tip them to want to look at this gentleman when he came to work during this counseling process, and is that a lapse that you would look at in further action?

MR. COATS: Well, we will certainly look at everything we possibly can here in our review that we are going to conduct.

My understanding is that he did carry a duffle-type bag in with him that had the gun, and other than that, we don't have any more information for you, Mark.

REPORTER: Page Hewitt with the Chronicle. This is for the Lieutenant.

Did you find any evidence that Phillips was suffering from severe mental illness of any kind?

LIEUTENANT BAIMBRIDGE: Well, aside from the obvious situation.

REPORTER: Did he ever take any medication, any --

LIEUTENANT BAIMBRIDGE: No. No. There was no
medication or anything like that, aside from, you know, the writings, that sort of thing. To say he is not in a normal state of mind is obviously an understatement, but no, there was no medication or anything like that.

REPORTER: One more quick question, if you don't mind. Can you address the possibility of counterfeit software? I don't know who that might go to. Was that an issue? Can you confirm that there was anything like that going on?

ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: There is an IG investigation at NASA underway regarding counterfeit parts -- not software -- parts from a particular distributor of parts, labeling the parts as being made by one manufacturer when they were not, in fact, made by that manufacturer. I don't think that has any bearing on this case.

Now, again, Dave Beverly was a parts specialist, and we try very hard to make sure that we truly do have space-grade parts in flight hardware, but we have not understood any connection between that investigation and this incident.

REPORTER: Susan Roesgen again with CNN. Since I might not get another shot, I have got two quick ones in
First of all, can you tell us the nature of the poor performance review, and secondly, is there psychological screening that goes on not only for NASA employees, but also for contract employees? Are you doing psychological testing? Certainly, the Nowak case comes up in relation to this as well, so two questions.

MR. MILLER: I will take the first one on the nature of the deficiencies. We receive midterm evaluations from our customers on all of our tasks.

On this particular task, Mr. Beverly reported that he was unhappy with some of our schedule performance, our participation in meetings, and many of the things that we identified in our eight-step improvement plan for Mr. Phillips. We take that information and our process is we put it in our corrective action system and assign it to a manager to go work with the customer and the employees to remedy whatever deficiencies there are.

This is very typical. We get a number of comments like this every midterm, and we go work them. There was nothing out of the ordinary in Mr. Beverly's comments or concerns that he voiced. They were straight
forward and things we normally just go handle.

REPORTER: I'm sorry. What was he doing wrong?

MR. MILLER: There were schedule performance problems, not flagging things to management when he would find a problem, that kind of thing. There was no technical issue with his QA work or electronical engineering capability.

REPORTER: And a psychological screening question for both the contractor and the regular NASA employees?

MR. COATS: Well, unless an employee is in a special situation like if he has to have a high security clearance or for astronauts, if we are going to put them in long-duration missions or whatever, no, we don't have psychological screening for the employees.

ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: That is not a condition of employment for Federal civil service, nor for contractors, unless they are in unusual job situations, and then they have to agree to have such screening. I mean, that can't be done on citizens just in an arbitrary way.

REPORTER: So Astronaut Nowak might have that -- would have had that screening, you are saying, but not Mr. Phillips as a contract employee in a non-long-term mission?
ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Broadly speaking, that's correct.

REPORTER: It seems that clearly Mr. Beverly was Phillips' intended victim. I was just curious. Was Ms. Crenshaw's office housed in the same location? Was she supposed to be there?

MR. COATS: My understanding is that -- and, Steve, correct me if I am wrong -- is that Fran and David did share an office there. So Fran was in that office. Mr. Phillips was down the hall in a separate office. So he came down to David Beverly's office, and of course, Fran was in there because she shared that office.

REPORTER: Jennifer Miller with CBS News. My question was similar.

Is there any relationship between Ms. Crenshaw and Phillips other than she happened to be there when he came in the room?

MR. COATS: No.

MODERATOR: And we have got one more over here.

REPORTER: Lieutenant, did Crenshaw indicate that Phillips at any time showed remorse or apologized or anything during her time being held hostage?
LIEUTENANT BAIMBRIDGE: He never showed any remorse towards killing Mr. Beverly.

He did make numerous statements to her that he wasn't going to hurt her. He did call her his hostage before he ever shot Mr. Beverly. He made numerous comments to her that he was his hostage. He did take some care to not harm her, even when he was duct-taping her hands and her mouth, but at no time did he ever show any remorse.

MODERATOR: And Mark?

REPORTER: Thanks. Mark Carreau from the Houston Chronicle. I think it is for Mike Coats and Mike Griffin. Could you sort of explain how you want to sort of bring closure as far as a review to this process? I know sometimes you have review boards, and I know you have a couple underway after the Nowak incident, but does this rise to that? What sort of structure will your reviews take, and who will they report to, and how will you sort of dispense the findings when they are made in terms of NASA contractor, human resources, security issues?

ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: Mark, I think all of that remains to be determined.

I mean, this happened on a Friday afternoon. We
will start on Monday to determine the nature and scope of any necessary review.

I am certainly not a security expert, but we have people who are, and we will put that process together.

Depending on the nature of the conclusions such a review produces, we will share them in an open fashion with our contractors and our fellow civil servants and the press. If there is material that emerges from such a review that would be viewed as making it more likely that an incident like this would happen again or that would reduce our ability to protect such incidents, then just as the police were informing you earlier, there are things we don't put out, but we will try to make the best judgment we can on which is which.

MODERATOR: I think we just have two more final questions here, and then we are going to wrap this up. Here in the front row.

REPORTER: I just wanted to ask a follow-up question to that. Then not the security, but the actual psychological profiling, I know you don't do it with the contractors, but you say that he was -- some people said he was a disturbed individual beforehand, and they didn't
notice any odd behavior other than what they normally saw.

With Nowak and with Phillips, is there a way that
maybe you can look at addressing people that might have,
might be disturbed, who people say this person is acting a
little bit funny, have someone go and talk to them? I
imagine this is a very high-stress environment. Would that
be something that is useful to these people that you are
taking steps to look at changing as well?

ADMINISTRATOR GRIFFIN: A survey across
Government was just recently completed naming NASA as one
of the top few places in Federal Government service in
which to work. It is hard to accept that we truly have
such a high-stress environment if that is the case.

It is a high-performance environment, and our
people are high performers. David Beverly was uniformly
regarded by those who worked with him as an incredibly high
performer in his specialty.

We live in a free society. We do not have a
governmental state in which people can be plucked out of
their offices or off the street and made to report for
counseling or evaluation or assessment because someone
thinks they are acting strangely. We do not have such a
The price for having a free society is that apparently sometimes incidents such as this occur, but I can't say enough that we do not live in a society where because someone else thinks that someone is acting strangely, that they can be subjected to evaluation, examination, detention, or any other thing.

MODERATOR: This will be our last question.

REPORTER: Rasha with AP.

Has Mr. Phillips received a negative review before? Do you have any indication why he reacted badly to this one?

MR. MILLER: Mr. Phillips has been on the contract since 1992 and a Jacobs employee since 2005. His last performance evaluation was average, and we give raises each year. He received an average raise.

Up until the last few months, he was considered a solid-performing employee.

MODERATOR: Thank you all very much for your time and for being here today. That will conclude our press event.

[End of Press Briefing of April 21, 2007.]