

Remarks by Michael D. Griffin
NASA Administrator
Visit of Queen Elizabeth II to the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center
May 8, 2007

Your Majesty and Your Royal Highness, allow me to add my voice to those welcoming you to NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center today. Your visit allows us to highlight and to celebrate the great traditions of exploration and discovery that bind the British and American peoples.

When you last visited a space program facility, nearly twenty five years ago, you went on to remark eloquently during your year-end address about the shuttle carrying on the great tradition of sailing ships in opening up new horizons for human communication and enterprise.

This same spirit of discovery is also found here at Goddard, home of the great observatories of the past, present and future, such the Hubble Space Telescope and the Solar Dynamics Observatory, on which Great Britain has so ably collaborated with NASA.

Indeed, space exploration is an endeavor in which the U.S. and U.K. have a long history of bilateral cooperation to celebrate and build upon. For example, Britain's generosity in allowing us to place a tracking facility in the Bahamas was critical to the Apollo lunar landing program in the 1960s.

With similar dedication to exploration and discovery, we hope to work closely with the UK on new endeavors involving the moon. Just last month, I and my counterpart from the UK signed a historic agreement to jointly study how we might embark on future planetary exploration of the moon and beyond.

Stories about people doing incredible things in the face of incredible challenges are the ones touch us most deeply and meaningfully. Professor Hawking's zero-G aircraft flight last week is one such story; this is the kind of thing expands our imagination of the limitless possibilities for humans.

I truly believe that by 2024, just over a century after Anglo-Irish explorer Ernest Shackleton's last voyage to Antarctica, American and British explorer astronauts will be exploring the region around Shackleton crater near the moon's South Pole. One of them may be among the children that you will meet today at the Visitor's Center, who will look back on this historic occasion and trace their own desire to explore to the day that the Queen came to Goddard.

Your Majesty and Your Royal Highness, thank you for visiting NASA today. We look forward to continuing our voyages of discovery with you.