Administrator Sean O'Keefe Roundtable

MODERATED BY GLENN MAHONE, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PRESENT:
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JIM JENNINGS, ASSOCIATE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR, INSTITUTIONS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT, NASA

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[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM A TELEPHONIC RECORDING.]
MR. MAHONE: Good afternoon. We've got a rainy day. I don't know if all of you had a chance and an opportunity to watch the update that the Administrator did a few moments ago. If you did not, the tape will be ready later on this afternoon, and it will be airing on NASA TV. I think the next one is at 7 o'clock, I believe, 7 o'clock this afternoon.

I would like to make a couple of introductions. Of course, all of you know the Administrator.

For those of you who do not know, this is Jim Jennings. He is the Associate Deputy Administrator for Institutions and Asset Management.

We also have with us Astronaut Jim Weatherby who has been working on this issue with Jim over the past several months.

We have Scott Stricoff, and Scott is with BST, and, of course, that is the company that we have been working with on this issue.

Part of Jim's team is here, also.

The Administrator is going to have to leave probably in about 40 minutes, and Jim and the rest are more than willing to stay if you have additional questions.
With that, Mr. Administrator?

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Thank you all for spending the time. I appreciate the chance to give you a little -- let me just start with a slightly different topic than the one we discussed here at the update a moment ago, but I did make mention of it in the course of it. Indulge me, if you would. I appreciate your willingness to do that.

We have really been on a concerted effort in the last several weeks to go out and visit each of what we call the Explorer Schools. These are 50 schools that were selected about a year ago based on their interest in applying for a program that is really kind of a novel approach to things.

About a year and a half ago, we had lots of discussion about how to structure our education outreach efforts and inspire the next generation of explorers and so forth. We went about the process of defining a set of approaches, and they were all kinds of ideas and various teachers, associations, and so forth all had different notions on how we do this.

We found a little one that was really kind of novel which is to ask schools: What do you need? What
have we got? We have got all this great stuff. We are not professional educators. You are. So here is all this great stuff we have, and it is on the website. You can access all of these things, and we made it a lot more user-friendly than it had been and consciously went about the process of trying to make it something that was a navigable means to do that as well as a lot of educational materials.

We said here is the full range of all the stuff we have, what could you use, rather than us swoop it in, saying, "Here is what we have. Take this, and this is what you can use."

As a consequence, different schools across the country applied for this program, and it is not a lot of resources. I think it amounts to over a 3-year span that you are in the Explorer School program. It amounts to, in total over the 3 years, $20,000. So it is not the resources. It is the access to all of the individual programs and activities and materials and people and all the things that we do.

We are saying, "This is all the neat stuff we do. Is this of help to you in designing curriculums and educational tools to bring math and science to life?" And
rather than going out and soliciting, going to a school and
saying you are an Explorer School, we just send out an
invitation saying, "Anybody would like to apply, we are
going to pick 50 of them." So it was based on the
initiative that was taken by individual teachers and
administrators at each of these, primarily, middle schools
across the country in places where we don't have any center
involvement geographically at all.

In many of these places, it just turned on the
initiative of these teachers in order to really access this
information.

In the course of the last several weeks, every
center director, every associate administrator, every
assistant administrator, Jim, I mean you name it, everybody
has been to at least one of these schools. I have
personally been to four now, and it is unbelievable. It is
the most phenomenal transformation, if you will, of
communities and schools and so forth that I have ever seen.

The whole definition and how the school kind of
views itself has changed. You can walk through some of
these schools and see the overwhelming kind of influences a
lot of this has had, the excitement that is generated. In
each of the stops we have made -- and again, these are
places that are way outside of any of the centers. So, therefore, the association of NASA was prior to this little or nil, and yet, the enthusiasm at each of these go in and talk about the exploration agenda, where are we going, what is it about, the next generation of explorers that we need to motivate folks to think about being engaged in this.

The folks who show up is not just the kids that are in the school there, and they are all delighted to have an hour or so off from classes, but it is also their parents, community leaders, folks from all around the area. There are a couple of places where we actually had other schools that came in because they wanted to be part of it, even though they wanted to figure out ways to partner with some of the schools.

The original idea was to really connect with how are we doing with this, are we providing the right information, is it of utility to the schools involved, and the second part was to really advance this broader mission objective we have of inspiring the next generation of explorers, which was written into the very charter of this agency 45 years ago. It has been a very fundamental aspect of what we are supposed to do.

And what I didn't expect to come out of it was, I
think, the renewing kind of experience that all of us have had in doing this of why this stuff really matters, why people really care about this, and the enthusiasm has just been something I never imagined. I couldn't gather the depth of that enthusiasm for it.

This is not because they were all prompted to do it. They really genuinely look at this and say this is interesting, fascinating, cool stuff. It is kind of a neat way, what I didn't realize and didn't anticipate quite to the depth that it has occurred, a great way, I think, for all senior leadership around the agency and all of the colleagues who have also volunteered for doing this stuff, too, to really engage with the people we serve and why it really matters to them and why this is really something that is of value. It kind of helps recharge batteries and to remind you that this is really important stuff, and it has great bearing, I think, on the conversation I had today with our colleagues and the survey that was released yesterday and so forth, which I think is indicative of, I think, a couple of issues that are very important.

The way we view each other in this agency -- and the survey results, I think, very clearly, when compared to all the different corporations, agencies, other
organizations that BST has engaged, over 200 of them over
the many years, they are really quite a bench-mark
institution. Scott, I am sure can speak to the depth of
experience that his firm brings to this, to help
facilitate, not give you the answer, to help facilitate
what folks think of what we do.

In some ways, this whole experience with the
Explorer Schools has reminded me why we need to engage in
this. It has bearing not just in terms of what we do to
each other and how we treat each other in helping to
accomplish these goals, but if we are more successful at
it, it really has the benefit to the broader public that we
serve. If we are that much better at it by really coming
to grips with some of the things we think are good parts
about what we see among and between ourselves and the way
we do business and how we behave and how we treat each
other as well as how we carry out the public's business, it
means we will be just that much better at doing this in the
future.

It is an important set of objectives and one that
I think is a good reminder of why we are doing this. It
isn't just for the yucks of it. It is really because it
has great benefit and great bearing, and the public
reaction to is really is important. That is the kind of
stuff that is worth doing, that great nations do great
things like this, and we need to be involved in it and more
expansive in the way we look at these questions.

Rather than just a psychology profile of how we
ought to treat each other, it really is a case where it has
meaning when we do better at what we do because there are
people out there that are really counting on it. It is a
renewing, uplifting kind of experience that I did not
anticipate, and I was just really gratified to have. So,
as a consequence, I am looking for more Explorer School
opportunities to go to because it really is kind of a neat
reinforcement of why it is what we are doing is so
significant.

That is it. We have got a lot of work to do.
The survey itself tells us a lot about the areas that we
have some very positive kinds of responses and reactions
among and between ourselves of what we think we are engaged
in and how we can be that much better as an organization.

Again, frankly, by what Scott and his BST
colleagues tell us, these are among the very highest
observations that they have seen, the most exemplary
observations they have seen in over 200 organizations,
among the highest.

There is also a couple of cases where we really need to be mindful of, and I have talked a lot about it today with my colleagues, which is the manner in which we treat each other, what appears to be the survey result here is that the view is as long as we are all in something together and we are in a division or a branch or we can relate to each other and so forth, that the esteem between and among colleagues is viewed very positively.

Once you get beyond the scope of what your daily activity is, the view is that as an institution, as an agency, we are not as good at supporting professional development and opportunity and so forth and value of what we contribute professionally as we could be and should be, and that is an area where we really need to get specific and figure out exactly what is it that we need to do better in terms of professional development, training opportunities, advancement, clarity, whatever. There are a number of different specific things we can do, I think, that will enhance that as well as the broader observation.

We need to create a climate, I think is what the BST report talks about at parallel two in which open communications is not only permissible, it is actively
encouraged, and we have talked about this a bunch of times, certainly since the Accident Investigation Board report, but certainly well before that, of what the challenges of human dynamics, human relationships, human communication that needs to be improved. That is one that we clearly keep reminding ourselves needs improvement. It needs to be facilitated at lots of different levels, but the leadership has got to take it on starting with me. That is something that I think we are all committed to, and we are certainly going to continue to work our way through.

The second area, too, I think is a very clear indication that our colleagues all are of the mind that what we say about the foundation of safety upon which we are built and what we do is a good commentary, but we don't actually live it as deeply as we say we do. That is something we really can deal with a lot more specifically, and it means we have really got to recommit ourselves to really looking at specific kinds of cases in which we remind ourselves that we will never eliminate the risk, but we can certainly minimize it much more than we are doing right now. That is everything we are engaged in, not just individual programs and so forth, but every activity.

Again, it is those two areas in particular that
builds on the other nine areas where we are really quite exemplary in lots of things, and it is what I think can really materially alter and change the way we do business and how we behave and how ultimately the culture is defined in this agency.

So, with that, let me stop and just take time out for your thoughts or questions.

Yes, sir.

**QUESTIONER:** Well, having said that, what are your specific ideas to respond to these recommendations for structure?

**ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE:** Well, I think we need to get very clear about developing what those approaches are, but there are two immediate things that we have done.

The first one is, again, the Diaz report that came out a couple of months ago. It had some very specific actionable items that are agency-wide. It isn't related to one center or one activity or whatever else, and there are a whole range of specific policies and ways we do business that are addressed in that report and there are deliverables that are anticipated. That is on the website. It is available. We can get you copies of it, et cetera. It very clearly lays out an agenda of what we need to do
to address some of this.

I think a lot of it, what our colleagues at BST have reminded us, are the kinds of things that come out of this survey and say here are the kind of things you need to do and respond to that.

In addition to that, I think we also need to, I think, focus on, again, the facilitation that the firm is providing for us to help open up the communication loop in a much wider open array and doing things in a more proactive way that really encourages folks to create a climate in which this kind of constructive communication and dialogue is exchanged.

Finally, I think the second area or point of view is the range of different things we need to do, very specifically, to address the observation on the part of folks that as an institution we don't support our people as well as we should.

The first things we can start with, again, is to really focus on professional development, really focus on training opportunities, really focus on a workforce kind of environment issues and then really tease out this question much more broadly of what specifically will people say that is what will change my disposition of how deeply the
institution supports me as part of the inquiry we really
have to engage in at every leadership level throughout the
agency, to really inquire of people exactly what is it that
would have you believe that the institution supports you
better and get those ideas from each other, from all of us
as colleagues, as opposed to saying I have this preordained
answer and this is going to fix it.

Much of that is what the facilitation process
that BST is helping us work through. It will give us the
chance to go inventory and figure out how we proceed from
there.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTIONER: So are you specifically embracing
BST's 3-year plan with 5 months start-up and all of that?

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Well, I think what they
have clearly delivered is, again, a wide path that
describes how we proceed ahead and some measurable metrics.
I mean as real things we can look to in 5 months time to
see how this process can move along.

Again, this is not something that started up
yesterday. We have been at this now for months, since the
Accident Investigation Board report came out. I have been
consulting with them and others to try to formulate what
the right way to do this would be and the ultimately settled on, I think, the approach, the facilitation effort that they can bring to bear on this.

So, again, it isn't what they are going to deliver. It is what we are going to do ourselves. They are just there to help set the framework for it. We have got to adopt this ourselves.

QUESTIONER: But are you agreeing to the one-on-one coaching--

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Oh, yes, absolutely.

QUESTIONER: --and the interviewing?

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Absolutely. Signed up.

We are there. As a matter of fact, my first one is tomorrow.

Yes, sir.

QUESTIONER: You mentioned professional development, the need for more professional development. I take it, you can look to Corporate America and find companies that do a better job than that, tending to professional development needs in the workforce, but what about when you look throughout the Federal Government? Are there any agencies you are aware of that do a much better job, or is there a certain standardization given that a lot
of things flow down from the Office of Personnel naturally?

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Well, that is a tough one because, frankly, there is a break-up here downstairs at the [inaudible] Clay Johnson and Kay Coles James. We are here to recognize that we are the best agency in the Federal Government on human capital strategic planning and how we treat, how we look to move ahead on the workforce. We have got the highest rating of the entire Federal Government on this.

The surveys that came out, conducted by others than us, suggest this is the most desirable agency to work for in the Federal Government. That is the American University survey that was released last fall or whatever.

There is a lot to build on here. There is a lot of good best practices to look at across the Federal agencies, but many of them are calling us to figure out how did you all do this, how did you get your way forward in this. So, while we may not be there in our judgment as colleagues among and between each other, we obviously are heading down a pretty good path and it is one that, again, all the measurable metrics that are out there would tell you that there are some things we need to emphasize and things we need to do differently, but we have got a pretty
solid foundation in terms of enthusiasm and interest on the part of colleagues around the agencies as well as best practices we have adopted.

Final point. In the Workforce Flexibility Act that the Congress just enacted 6 weeks ago that we have been working for over a year to have enacted, and the President signed it, incorporates the best practices of every agency out there.

I am eternally grateful to Kay Coles James because she worked with us to develop a piece of legislation that would take every pilot program, every test program, every approach that has been done at every other agency and look at the full range of all of them and which ones that would have greatest likelihood, suitability, and advantage to this agency. We package them all up based on that Federal-wide bench mark, best practices experience, put it altogether, and put it together as the NASA Workforce Flexibilities Act, and the Congress finally enacted it.

So we have been looking to one of the best practices out there, how do we incorporate and how do we get motion, and we have from the date of enactment something like -- we had to wait until June to begin to
implement it. It is a report requirement. That report has been delivered. We have laid it all out, "Here is how we intend to implement all of these provisions that take these best practices from across the agencies of the Federal Government and implement them." So we are anxious to get started come June when we are permitted to do so by law.

Yes, sir.

**QUESTIONER:** A lot of the stuff that is in this report, I read it and I said no kidding. You look back at some of the studies that go back to '96 and '97 and it seems to be that NASA is just getting better at the old things. People say, "Well, I am afraid to speak out."

Well, now they will say publicly that "I am afraid to speak out," but they won't speak out. Yet, I have gotten five or six responses before I left the house this morning from NASA Watch saying, "Yeah, this is great, but don't quote me."

It always comes back that there seems to be some sort of force field that middle management, not the individual, not the higher-ups -- there seems to be some pervasive block. Has this process been given any guidance to go find these blocks? They seem to be individual or certain ways of management. If you don't get that from the
responses, then people are like walking around thinking how can I keep somebody from talking. It is more like they want to, but something stops them somewhere, and it is an amorphous something.

**ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE:** Let me ask my colleagues to speak to this one, particularly Jim. He has really spent a lot of time working on this earlier on. It was before the Accident Investigation Board report had come out. Jim had really done a comprehensive look at some of the stuff. So I will ask him to speak to this for a second.

It strikes me as two things going on, just generally. The first one is a natural human propensity to really not want to get too far out in front on something like this in a big group of people. It is a natural characteristic on the part of -- not all, but most --

**QUESTIONER:** With attribution?

**ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE:** With attribution, that is right. It is a general view.

I mean, I know this is going to come as a big shock to all of you here in the room, but there is a lot of people that don't like talking to you all. They are afraid to talk to you, and that is not true just at NASA. That is
true with any Federal agency, any corporation. You all know this. So the issue of being identified is something that is kind of against human nature in a lot of ways. So there is a little bit of that going on, I think, that has to always be present. You have to constantly figure out a way to conquer that because there is a bit of that kind of view.

The second one, though, I think is there really obviously has been -- and the Accident Investigation Board laid this out. I mean, it was powerful commentary, among the most powerful commentaries that I heard from Al Gehman was he said, "Everything that has been written in this report are also observations about the way people behave. It is not only things that we have heard about or could document, but we saw ourselves." Now, that really is enough to kind of stand you up and say the Accident Investigation Board clearly witnessed folks who basically were in a mode of saying, "Wait a minute. Don't listen to that guy. He doesn't know what he is talking about," things like this. That is just indicative of, I think, the kinds of challenges that we have ran across during the accident itself, what would cause it.

It is kind a mind-check that says we have got
things to do, we have got to get on with this, and we don't
have time to listen to everybody moan and groan about every
issue out there. That is part of the mind-set, and it is
not something that is malicious or sinister, generally, but
more so, I think it is dispositional. And we have got to
shift that.

QUESTIONER: Well, my observation is that it
seems to be that people are at about 10,000 feet on this.
They know there is a problem just below, but they just
won't go all the way into either pointing at a level of
management or a type of manager or a place or an
organization. It is kind of like you know it when you
smell it, but you don't know exactly where it is coming
from, but you smell it.

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: I am conflicted with that
one because I get a lot of e-mails, and they are
identified.

QUESTIONER: [Inaudible.]

[Laughter.]

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: There is certainly a view
that is out there that there is a real reticence to want to
wind up in an open setting and that there is not a climate
that encourages that, which is the second major problem I
think that was identified in the survey.

It is a challenge of communications. An academic colleague of mine at Syracuse used to always define this, a profound observation. He said this is indicative of the fact that people are hard. This is really tough.

Jim?

MR. WEATHERBY: The first thing that I think we should do is to find out why people are reluctant to speak up, and there are various reasons. There are about 12 that I can come up with.

In large part, it is not because they are afraid of being fired. In very large part, they are afraid of becoming rendered ineffective and being moved to a different job, which to somebody at NASA, it is the equivalent of being fired. There is something always falling down the process, always speaking up, "I don't get listened to anymore." So that is a great fear that people have to render it ineffective.

It stems from the can-do spirit, the culture. Our pervasive culture for the last 45 years has been one of mission accomplishment, and we really get things done. If there is someone who is slowing down the process, it is only the managers that are feeling pressure to not speak
up, but sometimes it is even the peers. So you really have
to understand all the various different reasons why people
are reluctant to speak up, and I acknowledge that there are
very many people that will not speak up.

Then, as Mr. O'Keefe says, we need to create an
environment that encourages people to speak up. One of the
most powerful things I have ever heard, Tony Tarelli [ph]
out of postgraduate school said, "For people to speak up at
NASA, they have to believe that the leaders are willing to
accept the setbacks when they elevate concerns," and that
is a very difficult thing to do if we want to get on with
it.

One of the things we can do is create an
environment where a launch hold is viewed as a successful
manifestation of a good safety culture, not a bad
manifestation. It isn't that we failed because we held a
launch; it is because we succeeded at stopping a launch
when we shouldn't have launched. We have to be bold enough
to not read the newspapers and see any of the editorials
about how NASA failed again. We have to do what is right.

It is a very easy thing to say, to do what is right. It
is a very difficult thing to explain. The issues are so
complicated and so demanding, but we must create an
environment that allows people to speak up without fear of retribution.

Again, as Mr. O'Keefe says, you don't have to do what the person is voicing dissent or a minority opinion. You don't have to do what [inaudible] says, but you must engage that person and find out what is going on behind what they are saying and then really have it open and air the concern before you make a decision.

If you do that, there are two things that are great that happen. You engage the collective IQ of the whole group of people, not just the leaders or the supervisors, but the workers who are close and cognizant of the data. When we engage the collective IQ, you come up with a better decision.

The second thing is you get people to buy into this decision, whatever it is. If they feel like they are part of this decision going into the input and they are being listened to, then they are going to buy into the ultimate answer.

Just a couple of quick things we can do, right off the top is to, again, as Mr. O'Keefe says, create an environment of respect, where people feel respected, create an environment of trust where the worker can come and the
supervisor or upper-level people trust that what they are saying is valid because they are the experts and they know what they are talking about. They are working the issues.

We need to create an environment of openness, candor, and honesty where people can say things and not feel like they are going to be pushed aside or rendered ineffective, and then, fourthly, an environment of mindfulness where we are thinking about all the factors that go into it, not just the one concern, but all the different factors. It isn't just budget. It isn't just cost. It isn't just technical.

It is all of them properly balanced.

I could go on forever.

**MR. MAHONE:** For all of you that is on the line, that was Jim Weatherby, and he will be available afterwards, but just since it wasn't identified, that was Jim Weatherby. I'm sorry.

**ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE:** There is one real specific manifestation in what Jim has talked about that is pretty powerful. It is one we really thrashed around with and are looking to make as a kind of standard way of doing business that is an element of the way the Naval reactors community does business, which is to always, always, always solicit minority opinion.
If everybody sits there and says, "Yep, we are all in agreement on this," you have got to worry. If there isn't a minority view that is expressed, then go out and find one. What is the opposition position to what it is you are proceeding with? So at least you can reconcile it and understand what it is. It is the very best the way that the peer review system works, and it has the effect in the Naval reactors community, interestingly, of then prompting others to look at that opposing position and say, "You know, there is something to that. Maybe I am not as solid about my position as I thought I was because I am just now hearing something different." So, as a consequence, it helps moderate stridency, if you will, of those who believe with great conviction of where they are going.

If they start here in the opposing view, it kind of motivates you to think about either reinforcing why you believe what you believe and understanding why you do better or you moderate that view.

Yes, ma'am.

**QUESTIONER:** I have two questions, actually, one for you and then a follow-up for Mr. Stricoff. Given what this report says about contractors feeling like they are
being treated as second-class citizens, what do you intend
to do to fold them into this perfection survey and get them
to buy into the things that you are talking about today?

**ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE:** Well, the first major
step on this is to really try to size what the universe is
we are talking about.

The contracting community is very, very vast in
terms of what we are doing here, and there are some folks
in the contracting community that work side by side with
public servants. There are others where they are removed
geographically, physically, from direct interaction as a
consequence of a deliverable they are asked to do. So we
really got to look at what is the most effective way to be
inclusive in that process because there is a lot of cases.

My bias up front is to say for those areas where
we have performance contracts and services contracts for
which we are working together side by side, they ought to
be included in the process. At the same time, it is a
difficult task to really just get the size of what the
universe is here we are dealing with. To organize this in
a way that is effective is one of the tasks that Scott and
his colleagues are working on is thinking through exactly
how do we do this. I suspect that will be part of that at
the end of the 5-month period, exactly how we will enjoin
that particular question.

QUESTIONER: The follow-up that I have is you
have heard Mr. O'Keefe's summary of your report and his
explanation of this situation as it seems. Did he miss
anything? Is he correct?

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Would you like me to
leave?

[Laughter.]

QUESTIONER: No. I would like you to hear it.

MR. STRICOFF: Yes, I think it was a good
summary. I think, as he said, there are a number of
elements of culture as we measured it that are very strong,
and that is not a surprise. It is consistent with other
surveys that have been done by other people recently at
NASA, but there are some elements that need improvement,
and they particularly need improvement given the complexity
of the mission that NASA undertakes, which we are not
making washing machines here. This is complicated stuff,
and it has a high level of risk associated with it. If you
are going to be an organization that functions in that kind
of an environment, our view would be that you really can't
settle for being anything other than the best when it comes
to these kinds of organizational characteristics.

From what I have heard, I think the leadership of NASA has bought into that and agreed with that.

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: If I could just pile on one point, Scott's observation of how we really have to set a different standard is best manifested by the reaction across the agency to the safety issue.

We rank and score higher than the average of most of the organizations they have interviewed, and folks sit back and say on a scale of 1 to 5, we think we are about a 3. I think it is roughly in that area, 3-point, a percent, but in that neighborhood. Well, you sit back and say, "Well, that's [inaudible]." No. The answer is that is unacceptable.

If there is anybody that believes that we are saying one thing and doing another, it, therefore, diminishes that from a solid 5, that this is the most important thing. We say it is at the foundation of what we do. It is a fundamental aspect. It is a price of admission. It is what Gehman refers to as the equivalent of a Faustian oath or a pledge that we have bought into for exploration. It is an understanding that this has risk attended to it and safety is paramount in order to
understand that risk and to be able to mitigate it as much as possible.

Anything less than an over-the-top superlative No. 5, highest ranking on the chart of anybody you have ever talked to, belies what it is we say we do. So the bar we have got to set has got to be exceedingly high on this, and it really has to be an attitude that we instill throughout the agency that says, "Wait a minute. If there is a disconnect between what it is we are saying and what we are doing, we need to fix that."

**QUESTIONER:** Two questions. First of all, sort of a follow-up of what was said about the recommendations in this. Are there any that you are not planning to implement that you just rejected as not being said?

**ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE:** Well, I am not familiar with any.

**PARTICIPANT:** No, I'm [inaudible] how we go about implementing some of them, we may [inaudible].

**QUESTIONER:** And the second question is the report talks about these are some of the issues in terms of safety culture that came up with the challenge. What makes you in implementing this still certain that you can solve this problem for the long term and not for the short term?
ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Gosh, only fools have no
doubts. Okay?

You know, I am not certain of anything in this
life. We sure are going to give it our best effort all the
way through. We are committed to doing that, and
independent of the history, we really have got to resolve
to work this through, and it starts with the Columbia
Accident Investigation Board report implementing every one
of those recommendations to the best of our ability,
complying with those recommendations, not parsing through
the arguments. No. Do it. Okay? And that is everybody
up and down the process has resolved to do that. We have
embraced that before. That was a big step on our part.

We have been through this in being diligent about
not cutting the corners on this and absolutely serious
about having this implemented correctly. We have brought
in an external bunch of reviewers to make sure that we are
doing it right, and if we are kidding ourselves, they point
it out. And none of them have demonstrated themselves to
be [inaudible]. They are meeting at Johnson right now, as
a matter of fact. I suspect I will hear from lots of our
NASA colleagues who will say, "Boy, we just took another
shellacking today on Issue X or Y," because they are not
sitting back and saying, "Sure, talk yourself into this 
one."

It really is a case where we want to avoid really 
talking ourselves into some answer that is more convenient. 
We can employ exactly the same diligence in working 
through the Diaz report as well as the observations, I 
think, that will be coming forward that we are making of 
ourselves that is being facilitated by this particular 
review. So I think that this is all part of that process.

Warren, I'm sorry.

QUESTIONER: I am actually going to ask a 
different question.

QUESTIONER: I had one.

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Oh, I'm sorry.

QUESTIONER: You mentioned how you personally are 
going to deal with this. You are having your first session 
tomorrow. You said kind of a one-on-one. Are you going to 
have to essentially go back to management school, or what 
kind of ideas? What can you personally do to kind of 
implement the recommendations here, and how will it affect 
-- I mean, how do you reach out to, I guess, the people 
that work for you, your immediate staff and all of that? 
What do you see as some changes that you might have to
personally deal with?

**ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE:** I think the manifestation of the old adage is that you have to lead by example, and what I say is kind of, you know, okay, that is interesting, but if you are not really doing it, if you are not really walking the walk and demonstrating to folks that you are serious about doing this, you can't expect others to sit back and say one thing and do something else. We have got to be really serious about complying with this, and again, there is a whole range of things that I think we have to do as to the leadership, and it starts with me, that really have to indicate that yes, indeed, we are going to follow through on every one of these approaches to it and behave in a manner in which we want to see others do the same thing and encourage that kind of view.

So, look, I have just got to be diligent about it. There is no doubt about it.

**QUESTIONER:** I have a quick follow-up. How deep do you go up? I mean, you deal with high-level people here, staff people here. You deal with center directors. How far down are you willing to go or will you go to deal with, let's say, the lower echelon and set up communications with people below that level?
ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Well, with this first effort in the next 5 months -- and, Scott, correct me if I am over- or understating this -- there are some very specific places we are going to begin, again, facilitating a broader discussion and dialogue and so forth and different best practices, et cetera, that we can incorporate at the International Space Station -- oh, I'm sorry. That is, originally we thought about that. It is on the Shuttle program?

PARTICIPANT: Yes. That is an area that it will be.

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: That is an area where it will be. That is a place we are starting. So it is going to begin at certain places, and we will see how we modify that, how deep you drill and all that kind of stuff, as we work our way through this.

QUESTIONER: Could you list that list again? Shuttle?

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Oh, I'm sorry. I misstated it. At one point, we were kind of thrashing through the approaches we take and where we begin, and it turns on engineering directorate at Johnson, mission operations directorate at Johnson, all of Glenn, all of
Stennis -- those are two very different kinds of locations in that respect -- and the safety and mission assurance organization at Kennedy and at Goddard.

QUESTIONER: There was one line in the report I was hoping you could respond to. It said there is a clear perception that budget constraints compromise engineering a mission of safety. That struck me as a serious concern, starting with there is very little money. Do you think there is a problem with budget constraints here that could hamper mission safety, or is it just a perception problem?

Do you have any idea what would cause that kind of perception?

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Well, this one, we really need to work at hard because I have never been part of any organization anywhere, public, private -- it doesn't matter what -- in any of my professional experiences in which I ever met anybody who stepped up and said, "I got plenty enough money. No, thank you. I don't need any more. I am all set. It looks find." These are among the things I have never heard, and I fully expect I will never hear them as long as I live in any professional experience.

There is always an opportunity. There is always a circumstance where resources are required. So what you
have got to do is start with the premise that it is a constant competition among and between priorities, and so trying to get the appropriate measurement, the appropriate metric, the appropriate means to actually evaluate what is resource-necessary to proceed with different directions on this and to assure this is the most important part of your problem rather than the view that is expressed because there is a lot of competing views about this one.

It is one we really have to come to closure on and understand very clearly what it is we think we will gain or lose by varying levels of resource dedication, and there are some folks, this is still a debate. It has been going on for 10 years that I am told or at least aware of, which is we move from a quality-control approach, which every single thing is stamped and inspected, to one that is more of a quality-assurance mind-set, which is a very modern, contemporary approach that is a best-practice bench mark of the very best, highest standard, most safe corporations in America.

There are still folks who believe we should go back to the quality-control approach. Now, is that because it is a lack of resources, or is it a different methodology? I think it is the latter.
This is a real tough one, and it is one we really have to be extremely diligent in making sure that folks understand that this is what we are going to do to improve safety. This is what is necessary financially resource-wise to really do it right and have folks sit back and say, "Yep, that is what is going to be necessary in order to achieve this," rather than I think it ought to be bigger, better, this, that, whatever, more, and you really have got to evaluate those carefully.

MR. MAHONE: The Administrator has another event that he really has to get to, but Jim and the rest of the team will stay around for a few minutes to answer any follow-ups for you.

ADMINISTRATOR O'KEEFE: Thank you all very much. I'm sorry to hold you up.

QUESTIONER: Jim, can you follow up on what you were talking about how it starts at the different places that you mentioned and what exactly will start there and how that process will begin?

MR. JENNINGS: We knew that we couldn't take the whole agency as one. So what we wanted to do was take some areas that would give us a measure of what we are doing that says it is successful, to make sure it is successful,
before we distribute it to the whole area.

Frankly, we have looked at some of the scores that we got coming in, and Stennis scored lower on the survey than our other NASA centers. So we decided that that would be a good place to start. So we are going to go into those organizations and develop a [inaudible] plan for how we intervene with those organizations to improve what we have seen.

We are going to start with the leadership, do some assessments of leadership behaviors, things like [inaudible], to get an idea of how the leader is behaving, and then we will develop an individual action plan for those leaders, the sort of things that will lead to change to improve the organization.

We will also do some feedback for those leaders, actually of their [inaudible], to see if they are actually doing what they say they are doing, and we will do some behavior-based team training for other parts of the organization to start moving those organizations forward.

So, in those organizations that we have identified, those are the kinds of things we will start doing to try to change those organizations.

**QUESTIONER:** Why did you pick Kennedy and the
others? You mentioned why you picked Glenn and Stennis.

MR. JENNINGS: That is an area that we are really interested in. Kennedy, we are doing a reorganization of that organization to improve it. We had gathered some comments about some of the upward mobilities, some of the same things that we saw need improving in those organizations. So we want to look at that.

Goddard, on the other hand, was, I guess, an organization that was pretty stable and in general got a good report.

So we wanted to do two different organizations, one that was changing --

QUESTIONER: Goddard or Johnson?

MR. JENNINGS: Goddard. Goddard, yes.

So we have got a good baseline. Because Kennedy is changing, we wanted to do one that -- there was also data on that, primarily the reason we picked to do Goddard.

QUESTIONER: And what about JSC? Is it just because it is held like a Shuttle program?

MR. JENNINGS: We decided that the mission ops and engineering are organizations that we are looking to start working more closely together and it is a cursor that we want them to start working better as an organization.
So we thought it would be a good time to intervene in those organizations since we are really trying to change the way they do business. We need to communicate more with each other, work closer together. So that is one of the primary reasons.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Jennings, what did you mean by [inaudible] needs changing?

MR. JENNINGS: They are reorganizing their SMNA organizations.

QUESTIONER: SMNA?

MR. JENNINGS: Right. In 2000, we decentralized and now we are centralizing the organization.

QUESTIONER: Two questions. One, does this mean that Mr. O'Keefe has a lesson plan that he has to follow in terms of -- you know, he probably gets into it. He is [inaudible].

Second of all, looking at some of the responses, headquarters responses sucked in many ways. Wouldn't you think that, you know, the fish and the head rotting and all of that sort of stuff, that you want to start at headquarters to set examples for the agency?

MR. JENNINGS: Yes. We are starting with some of the leadership at headquarters. That wasn't brought up,
but we have taken, I guess, 10 or 15 of the key leaders at headquarters and start working with those individuals, and we will use the same methods that we are using with the others. So we are starting at headquarters.

But, you know, Sean's mentoring, he would get feedback from Tom Krause who is president of BST on what he has observed in the organization, also what he has observed about Sean. So it would be a real candid feedback of what is going on in the organization.

QUESTIONER: Is that tomorrow's session?

MR. JENNINGS: Yes.

QUESTIONER: So how is that set up, like an hour, just the two of them sitting down?

MR. JENNINGS: It is a one-on-one session. I don't know how long they have.

PARTICIPANT: Management therapy.

[Laughter.]

MR. JENNINGS: Do you want to describe it a little bit, Scott?

MR. STRICOFF: One of the things, a characteristic in any organization, especially large organizations, is the higher up the organization you go, the less feedback individual executives get. More and
more, they find themselves in a vacuum. What we find is
that it is very helpful to be able to get them and outside
resources and speak candidly with them and give them advice
about ways that they can have the kind of facts that you
want them to have on their organization because it is hard
for anybody to see how they are affecting an organization
themselves. Somebody in Mr. O'Keefe's position doesn't get
a lot of feedback about that from subordinates or anybody
else. So that is basically what it is about.

QUESTIONER: So how is this different than the
fad, [inaudible] and TQM, all this other nonsense where I
would go to this training and my bosses would go? How is
this different than every darn management fad that the
agency has been through in the last 15 years? What is
different?

MR. STRICOFF: The premise is that if you want
individual contributors to behave differently, whether it
is communicating better or upward or something else, what
individuals do is based primarily on the consequences that
they expect to receive from the organization.

So, if I want individuals to be more open in
their communication upward, I can't get that by training
them, and I can't get that by telling them or putting
posters on the wall.

The way I have to get that is by modifying the kind of behavior that we see in their immediate superiors. Their supervisors have to be looking for that feedback, have to be reacting to it in a way that is positive. It has to be closing loops when they get issues raised to them, and for that to happen, their superiors have to be behaving in a way that might [inaudible].

So, for that reason, what we are doing is starting at the top, Mr. O'Keefe and other people at headquarters, coming down through the center directors at the individual targeted locations we were talking about and down through those organizations to create in a cascaded sort of way leadership practices, leadership behaviors that encourage and create the right atmosphere to encourage the kind of behavior that you want [inaudible].

**QUESTIONER:** What do you do when the least level where the guy says, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, this is what I am supposed to do," and they don't change? But you can't fire anybody at NASA. If the person doesn't become more open, it is like almost using the process of [inaudible]. How do you get beyond that? How do you change some people that are the problem?
MR. STRICOFF: You know, I am not an expert in Government personnel policies, but even though you can't fire anybody in the Federal Government, I assume there are ways to deal with that issue, given different environments.

MR. JENNINGS: Yes.

QUESTIONER: [Inaudible] has been doing that for years. How is this different than all of that?

PARTICIPANT: [Inaudible.]

QUESTIONER: Yeah. I have worked at Reston, and we have a dozen GS-15's that were put in the corner because they didn't -- you know, let's just put them out of the way. They still draw a paycheck. They are an impediment of the agency's ability to perform, and people see that as a fate that they might end up at if they don't, as Jim said, go through the hole. What is different about this that gets people out of that hole that makes them want to participate?

MR. JENNINGS: What we need to do, we need to start from the top and start creating an environment, and leadership has to start being accountable. So, when we find people that are not willing to go along with the behaviors and traits that we want in the agency, that we actually put that in our performance plan and judge them
accordingly and eventually move them out of the system, and
that is part of being accountable as leaders. And that is
one of the things that have been missing.

Almost any survey you do with employees, they are
asked how good a job does management do with dealing with
incompetence or nonperformance, and it is very low because
they see the exact thing you saw at Reston. What you do,
you take them and put them aside, but we as managers have
to start being accountable and rate folks based on their
performance and go through the process of getting them out
of the system.

**QUESTIONER:** I guess the question is perhaps for
Scott. You mentioned O'Keefe is going to have his session
tomorrow, his first session.

BST has not been involved in this for more than a
couple of months. You don't know these guys. So how can
you walk in and assess someone and say this is what you
should be doing as a manager when they really haven't been
observed for a period of time, you don't know just what
their style is? It just seems kind of premature in a
sense.

**MR. STRICOFF:** The session tomorrow is really
just a preliminary introductory one. The plan for the
senior-level people is that we will be doing some data collection. We will be talking to their subordinates. We will be talking [inaudible]. In general, as we go down the organization, we are doing 360 data collection, talking to peers, talking to subordinates, talking to superiors to understand in very specific ways what their leadership style is, what their leadership practices are, and so we will be getting the kind of information that we need to be able to get some substantive feedback.

QUESTIONER: So, at some point, a month or two later, you go back to them and say that is what your guys think about you --

MR. STRICOFF: That is right.

QUESTIONER: -- and what are you doing to do about that.

MR. STRICOFF: What you are going to do about that and strategize about it, how to take advantage of the strengths and how to deal with the other things.

QUESTIONER: You talked about being objective, though. How can you be objective with Administrator O'Keefe if he is the one deciding whether to extend your contract?

[Laughter.]
MR. STRICOFF: You give him tough love.

[Laughter.]

MR. STRICOFF: That is our job, and we are ultimately -- we are going to be successful based on whether or not we can help this organization change, and if we soft-soap and don't say the things that need to be said and as a result if the organization isn't going to change, this isn't going to be successful. And in the long run, that doesn't do us any good.

QUESTIONER: Do you have a communications problem in the astronaut office?

PARTICIPANT: I think there are communications problems all throughout NASA, and again, what we need to do is identify those areas and find out why there are communications problems and take appropriate measures and create the conditions that allow people to speak up without fear of retribution.

I do want to add something. We were talking about what makes this program different than some of the other ones, ISO and TQM and those kinds of things. This plan is not a checklist or something that NASA historically has desired or valued to show as a procedure or method. This is a new way of thinking. This is about human
mastering interpersonal relationships and getting the best
out of subordinates.

   The way to do that is not with a plan or a
checklist or a cook book, "Here is How You Do It." It is
to teach and learn good leadership skills, again, create an
environment that allows the workforce to achieve the best,
and when it doesn't work, take appropriate action and be
committed to doing that. So that is the answer as I see it
on how this is going to work.

   If we have behaviors that are not conducive to
the new kind of culture we are trying to establish, those
people have to be moved.

   The final thing I wanted to say is that this
plan, again, isn't -- and we have said it already -- this
plan is not the BST plan. It isn't even really -- I don't
like to think of it as the NASA plan. It is the plan that
the workforce needs. That is why we do surveys and talk to
the workforce and find out what do they need because they
have the answers. They are working with the data. They
have cognizances. They are closest to the hardware. They
understand the risks, and these are the things that they
say they need through the survey and through the
question-and-answer sessions, which frankly I find more
valuable than the numerical survey.

Some of us already knew the answers to the survey before it came in because we understand the workforce and talk to them, and if you show any desire to try to improve the workforce situation, they will tell you what they need. They have the answer. That is why this plan is going to work because it is for people at NASA and the contractors all around the country.

QUESTIONER: I have a follow-up. I guess this is perhaps for Mr. Jennings.

Isn't there a danger here of a program like this essentially killing kind of the personality diversification of this agency?

We all know that at universities that sometimes the best people doing certain jobs are absolutely the worst when it comes to the person dealing with people, and in order to kind of homogenize this kind of feeling, some of these people might have to go. It might be the best in some engineering areas, some other areas that you have.

Is there a certain blandness of NASA coming because of this type of agency, this type of effort?

MR. JENNINGS: I think the reason we are kind of here and a lot of those things is because we are a
technical agency, and we worry more about technical things
than we do about people.

But what we have to do is we are going to
maximize the capability of the agency. We have to get
those technical folks where they are doing technical work
and not managing people.

I mean, we have some mechanism within the agency
where you can reward folks for their technical capabilities
without making them supervise a lot of folks. So what we
need to do is let the technical folks that don't want to
learn or can't manage people to go up the technical track
and become scientific technical, you know, senior folks
versus SES's which is designed to manage people.

So I think we have to be careful that we don't
destroy the things that have made us technically excellent
over the years, but we have to be able to manage people, so
that we can get the best out of people.

I mean, just imagine the brain power that we
could unleash when we create an environment where everybody
is open, everybody can come and discuss issues, technical
issues, any kind of issues with their management. We could
meet a lot of challenges that we have now if we have a set
of managers at each level that has to know more than the
folks below them. So you are really minimizing the total capability of the organization by not getting the best from everybody, and that is the kind of environment we want to create.

**PARTICIPANT:** If I could add, if you think about the technical complexity and the challenge of the physics of getting 100 tons to orbital velocity, it is a very difficult thing to intellectually manage. The workforce knows how to do this very well. They are so excited to come to work every day. They show their badge at the gate, and they come in and work on the Space program. Why do they do it? It isn't because of the salaries they get. It isn't because we are taking care of them. So it is not the care and feeding of the workforce. It is because they love working in the Space program where, again, Mr. O'Keefe said we are rated the highest Government agency to work for. It isn't because we are taking care of the people. It is because they love working for the Space program.

So blandness will never enter into NASA because of the mission that we have. We will always be an exciting place to work, and if we can take care of the people and unleash what Jim Jennings is talking about, brain power across this agency, it will be far better than we were, all
those successful years between accidents where we had successful flights.

It is a very exciting place to work, and it will never be bland.

**QUESTIONER:** For you, Jim. [Inaudible] George Abby [ph] [inaudible] the stuff of legends, and I am wondering if [inaudible] soul-searching now. Do you find yourself bumping up against kind of the tenor that he had set, this idea that there could be serious repercussions on your career, that you might never fly if he steps out of line?

**PARTICIPANT:** Don't play baseball.

**QUESTIONER:** I am sure you know better than I do because you are probably getting all the e-mails, but is that a path that NASA is dealing with now down at Johnson?

**MR. JENNINGS:** No. I don't think so at all, and I think George Abby was widely misunderstood by external folks outside the organization. He is a man who very much cared about the people. He especially cared about people who were doing the job correctly and doing it right and doing it with interest of the mission and NASA and the agency and safety and on and on.

So the only people that should be worried about
it are those who are not doing it correctly, and they should be worried if they are not doing the job correctly. Then I hope they worry enough that they change what they are doing to figure out how to achieve the best possible solutions to elevate concerns. If they are a manager, they really have to sense when the workforce is worried about something and draw it out of them if they are too shy to speak up, and there are some people who are that way. So it is the manager's responsibility to solicit, as Mr. O'Keefe says, the dissenting and minority opinion.

Then, to become a great organization, you have to go one step further. You don't just solicit the minority and dissenting opinion. You have to actively understand what they are trying to tell you. You don't spend all of your energy discounting their opinion or supporting your own opinion. You really have to understand what they are trying to tell you because, again, it is the workforce that understands the answers, that the astronauts who are flying the vehicle understand the risk that they are flying in, and they should be listened to. And it is the leader's responsibility to elicit those opinions and then do something with those opinions, to balance them correctly.

People who aren't doing that correctly should be
worried about their jobs.

QUESTIONER: But at the same time that you have people who are saying communication is an issue at NASA, you had less than half the workforce, the civil servant workforce respond. Where do you get in touch with the people who are bound to say that culture stuff is a bunch of hooey, I don't have time for that touchy-feely crap, it doesn't belong here?

PARTICIPANT: Nobody is saying that. The only people that are saying that are those at the -- if there are people who are saying that, the ones who don't want to deal with it. The workforce unanimously wants us to solve the problem and change the culture and allow them to speak up without fear of repercussion.

QUESTIONER: Where is the data? Like she said, half of the folks only responded. Why are they so afraid of answering a form that nobody will ever know who they are, they don't care?

MR. JENNINGS: Actually, there were folks that didn't trust the system enough to fill out the survey. We actually had folks that believed that if they filled out the computer online that somehow they could be identified.

I have sent out a reminder to folks, and they
misread the statement. I said, "If you have not filled out
the survey, please take this opportunity to do it," and
they read that sentence to think that I knew that they
didn't fill out the survey.

I had to go and actually read it to a person, and
some people said, "Okay. Give me a hard copy, and I will
fill it out and send it in."

**PARTICIPANT:** You know how much e-mail I get from
Hotmail because they are afraid there is somebody at NASA
that just waits for stuff to come to me?

**MR. JENNINGS:** There are folks who don't want to
speak up. On the survey, we didn't let the survey stay out
typically long as you usually do.

**QUESTIONER:** You did or did not?

**MR. JENNINGS:** We did not. We left it out for a
week or 10 days. About 10 days or so. Usually, you have
more time because folks are on vacations or weekends, but
we needed to get on with this. So we thought that the 45
percent was pretty good for the time we had it out, and
there was significantly enough data for BST to draw the
conclusion that they did.

They followed up by testing it, by having focus
groups and talking to individuals to see if it looked the
same as the results of the survey and it was. So we think
the data is significant.

**QUESTIONER:** Can I interrupt there?

**MR. JENNINGS:** Yes.

**QUESTIONER:** Were the focus groups comprised of
people who responded or not, either/or, or you don't know?

**MR. JENNINGS:** They were just randomly picked
from places.

**QUESTIONER:** I have a question, and I just want
to give both of you guys a chance on what I am going to
write on NASA Watch. And I think I know where you are
coming from.

If people don't respond to this lead time, you
say people have already responded to this latest fad.
"Hooey" is one of the words, actual words I have gotten
today -- that they will be moved aside. Now, if you hear
this -- you just said "moved aside." You know NASA civil
servants. You just gave me a perfect example of somebody
probably that I can give 300, and yet they read that line
and they think that you are after them with some electronic
gestapo.

There are people who will see the fact that if I
don't change, I am going to be moved aside. I am a civil
servant. I do not want to lose my job. How do you guys --
do you got a better word, a better way to say that, that
moved aside, in the sense of --

MR. JENNINGS: At the level -- we are really
looking at the leadership of this agency, and those are the
folks that have really got to embrace the new culture that
we want of foster.

We are not talking about the worker down at the
bottom. We are talking about the leadership. We are
especially talking about that level that you mentioned
where communication seems to stop. Things go down. Things
happen. So we have to work with that mid-management level
to get them to embrace the changes that we want to make,
and at the end of the day, if we can't change the people,
then we have to change the people.

MR. MAHONE: Any final questions? We will wrap
up a little bit.

QUESTIONER: Change the people.

PARTICIPANT: Change out the people.

MR. JENNINGS: That is the [inaudible].

[Laughter.]

QUESTIONER: No, no. I want it so it reads
properly for the people -- it will change out the people
[inaudible].

MR. MAHONE: Okay. Well, thank you all very much. Thank you, everybody.

[End of Roundtable.]