NASA Announces Name Change for Balloon Facility

NASA has officially changed the name of the National Scientific Balloon Facility (NSBF) in Palestine, Texas, to the Columbia Scientific Balloon Facility.

Rep. Jeb Hensarling, (R-Texas), proposed the name change to the House Committee on Science on April 26, 2005, as a reminder of what the crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia stood for: honor, bravery and the quest for knowledge for generations to come.

“This tribute to the crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia is in recognition of the dedication and sacrifice made by those brave individuals willing to risk their lives to further humanity’s knowledge about space exploration,” said Vern Jones, NASA’s senior scientist for suborbital research at NASA’s Science Mission Directorate, which manages the facility.

On February 1, 2003, the Columbia and crew were lost over the western United States during re-entry into Earth’s atmosphere. The 28th and final flight of Columbia (STS-107) was a 16-day mission dedicated to research in physical, life and space sciences.

The Balloon Facility was established in 1961 by the National Science Foundation in Boulder, Colo. The facility was moved to Palestine in 1963 and was formally named the National Scientific Balloon Facility in January 1973.

In 1982, sponsorship of the NSBF was transferred to NASA. In October 1987, NASA awarded a contract to New Mexico State University’s Physical Science Laboratory, Las Cruces, N.M., to provide engineering and launch support for the agency’s Scientific Balloon Program and for oversight of NSBF operations.

The NSBF provides complete balloon operation services and engineering support to the scientific community in the United States and several foreign countries. Operation services include inflating and launching the balloon, tracking and recovery of the payload, tele-command and data retrieval. Engineering support includes design of balloon systems, research in balloon materials, and electronics’ design.

The facility has launched more than 1,700 balloons for 35 universities, 23 research agencies, and 33 foreign groups. Payloads up to 5,000 pounds are routinely flown on balloons of up to 40 million cubic feet in volume at altitudes exceeding 20 miles. Flight time varies from several hours to several weeks. Seventy-four on-site contract employees work at the facility and support NASA’s international balloon operations.

NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center’s Wallops Flight Facility manages the scientific balloon program for the agency’s Science Mission Directorate.

Wallops Shorts.............................................

Range Activity on the Airport
Flights with NASA’s 757 aircraft from Langley Research Center will be conducted on Tuesday and Thursday. Tests will continue in the Radar, Enhanced and Synthetic Vision Systems Integrated Technology Evaluation. For further information contact John Valiant at x1422.

Launch
A NASA scientific balloon was launched from Ft. Sumner, N.M., on August 28.

The 29.47 million cubic foot balloon was an engineering test flight for the Antarctic Impulsive Transient Antenna (ANITA) long duration balloon payload.

ANITA is a radio telescope array designed to use the Antarctic continent as a detector to search for radio emissions from ultra-high energy cosmic ray neutrino interactions within the ice sheet.

Dr. Peter Gorham, University of Hawaii, was the principal investigator. Total flight time was 4 hours, 13 minutes.

In the news
Palestine Herald-Press
“NASA OKs Name Change for NSBF”

Eastern Shore News
“NASA Wallops to Mark 60th Year; Pilots Invited to Fly in for Event”
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Editor                 Betty Flowers
Asst. Editor            Rebecca Hudson

The Wallops 60th Anniversary Open House is October 1, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. If your organization or project would like to exhibit, contact Cheryl Outten at x1714 or Denise Gramlich at x1480 by September 9.