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Bobby Watkins

Director

Michoud Assembly Facility

Bobby Watkins is director of the NASA Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans. Named to the position in April 2015, he oversees and manages the multi-tenant manufacturing facility, where development of NASA's Space Launch System and Orion spacecraft are underway.

SLS is the most powerful rocket in history and will carry astronauts in the Orion crew vehicle, science experiments and cargo on deep-space missions, including to an asteroid and Mars. Michoud, a NASA-owned facility that is managed from NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, is one of the world's largest manufacturing plants.

From August 2010 until assuming his current position, Watkins was director of the Office of Strategic Analysis & Communications at Marshall. OSAC works to foster advocacy and support for Marshall and NASA, using sophisticated analyses for strategic decision-making and numerous internal and external communications conduits to communicate the center's goals and successes to its workforce, NASA leadership and Marshall's partners, customers and stakeholders.

On June 30, 2014, Watkins began a one-year detail to NASA Headquarters in Washington as director of the Legislative Liaison Division in the Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs. He was an adviser to senior NASA officials on all legislative matters and assisted and coordinated the relationships among Congress, NASA Headquarters and the agency's field centers.

In both 2013 and 2009, Watkins was a member of NASA's final Astronaut Selection Board. The board, appointed by the director of NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, is comprised primarily of senior astronauts who have flown in space and senior agency leaders with experience in spaceflight operations.

From 2007 to 2010, Watkins was chief of staff at Johnson, responsible for oversight of all technical and business integration activities on behalf of the center director.

He was Johnson's chief engineer from 2005 to 2007, establishing, maintaining and overseeing all its engineering policies, standards and practices. He assisted in maintaining and overseeing implementation of NASA-wide program and project management policies, standards and practices at Johnson.

From 2002 to 2005, he managed the Space Shuttle Planning and Evaluation Office, part of the Office of Space Flight at NASA Headquarters. He led the overall direction and execution of all on-site Space Shuttle Program activities, ensuring that shuttle upgrades and project element operations, planning and facilities requirements were consistent with shuttle program requirements and agency commitments. During that period, he was selected assistant associate administrator for enterprise operations in the Exploration Systems Mission Directorate, and was principal adviser to the associate administrator on policy and management.

In 2001, Watkins transferred from Johnson to NASA Headquarters as the Space Shuttle Orbiter Element technical liaison, representing Johnson's Space Shuttle Vehicle Engineering Office. From 2001 to 2002, he provided technical and management integration support during flight readiness and orbiter rollout reviews and launch events. He created key NASA products including position papers for Congress on space shuttle upgrades and shuttle operations.

From 1995 to 2001, he held increasingly vital leadership roles in the Space Shuttle Program at Johnson. He managed the program's laptop computer project, overseeing all hardware and software required for computer systems used by astronauts on the shuttle. He also was the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative for the Flight Crew Equipment element of United Space Alliance of Houston, the spaceflight operations company established in 1995 to consolidate many shuttle program contracts under a single prime contractor.

Watkins was selected in 1995 for the NASA Professional Development Program. During this six-month assignment, he was a legislative fellow for a member of Congress from Texas, and drafted and led efforts to pass a U.S. House Resolution to allow for a balanced NASA budget during a time of major budget cuts throughout NASA and the federal government.

His NASA career began in 1986 in Johnson's Mission Operation Directorate, assisting in implementing the Digital Voice Intercom System in the Mission Control Center. Four years later, he moved to the Management Integration Office within the Space Shuttle Program Office, overseeing all computer operations.

During his years of federal service, he has received numerous awards, including the NASA Exceptional Achievement Medal in 2012 for developing an Integrated Strategic Communications Plan and communications forum, "ExecConnect," for Marshall. He has also received a NASA Outstanding Leadership Medal in 2005 and the Exceptional Service Medal in 2009, and is the recipient of several NASA group achievement awards.

Watkins earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1986 from Albany State University in Albany, Georgia. He is a member of the National Society of Black Engineers, the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and the National Technical Association.

Watkins and his wife, the former Carmeladell Jackson of Houston, live in Huntsville.