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# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-08-1096](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Space Shuttle Program (SSP) is scheduled to retire in 2010, and the transition and retirement of its facilities and assets will be an immense undertaking involving approximately 654 facilities worth an estimated \$5.7 billion and equipment with an estimated value of more than \$12 billion. NASA plans to retire the SSP in 2010 to make resources available for the Constellation program, which is producing the next generation of space vehicles by 2015. Many of the SSP's resources are expected to transition to Constellation while others will be dispositioned or preserved for their historic value.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 directed GAO to assess NASA's plans and progress in transitioning and retiring the SSP's facilities and equipment. More specifically, GAO examined 1) the challenges NASA faces in defining the scope and costs of transition and retirement activities, and 2) whether the cost of these efforts is transparent in NASA's budget requests. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed SSP plans, budget guidance, and other documents, and interviewed relevant government officials and contractors.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that NASA clearly identify all direct and indirect SSP transition and retirement costs, including any potential exchange sale proceeds in its 2010 and future budget requests. NASA concurred with our recommendation.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-1096](#). For more information, contact Cristina Chaplain at (202) 512-4841 or [chaplainc@gao.gov](mailto:chaplainc@gao.gov).

## NASA

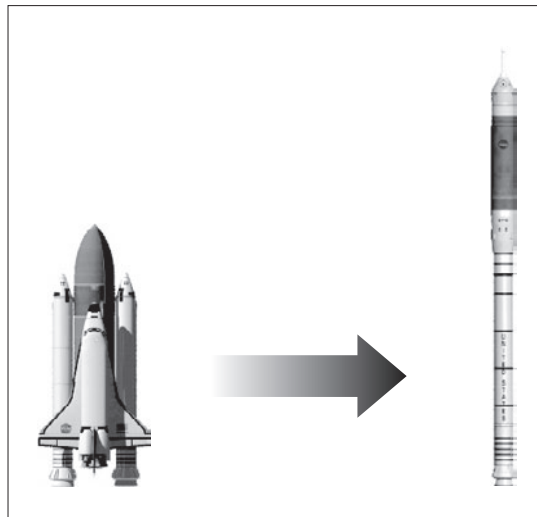
### Agency Faces Challenges Defining Scope and Costs of Space Shuttle Transition and Retirement

#### What GAO Found

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) faces disparate challenges defining the scope and cost of SSP transition and retirement activities. For example, because the Constellation program is still finalizing its requirements, the agency does not yet know what SSP property it needs to retain or the full cost of the transition effort. In addition, NASA faces other challenges that hamper its efforts to manage the transition and develop firm estimates of SSP transition and retirement scope and costs. For example, NASA has not developed final plans and/or cost estimates for making artifacts—including the orbiters Atlantis, Discovery, and Endeavour—safe for public display.

The total cost of SSP transition and retirement is not transparent in NASA's current budget request and is not expected to be reflected in its fiscal year 2010 budget request. This is due in part to delays in estimating costs, but also to where costs are being reflected. For example, although SSP's direct transition and retirement costs are identified in the SSP budget line, indirect costs related to environmental clean-up and restoration, maintenance of required real property facilities during the gap in human spaceflight, and demolition of excess facilities are not. In addition, NASA plans to offset some transition costs by utilizing an "exchange/sale" authority that allows executive agencies to exchange or sell non-excess, non-surplus personal property and apply the proceeds toward acquiring similar replacement property.

#### The Space Shuttle Program Is Retiring in 2010 and NASA Is Transitioning to Constellation Program Spaceflight Vehicles in 2015



Source: NASA.