

REMARKS OF DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR GARVER
AIAA SHUTTLE TRIBUTE
May 9, 2012

Thank you, Bob.

It's an honor to represent NASA as we join with AIAA in paying tribute to the Space Shuttle Program.

The accomplishments of the shuttle are too numerous to list. We all have our favorites, and the video we will see in a moment does an amazing job encapsulating the program.

While rocket scientists like to recite the specifics of the power and thrust of this out of this world spaceship – I like to focus on what these amazing vehicles allowed us to achieve.

The space shuttle literally changed the world – for the better.

In its early years, the shuttle launched critical communications satellites (and sometimes serviced them) and military payloads that kept our service men and women safe overseas.

The shuttle launched and serviced dozens of Earth and space science spacecraft that allowed us to peer into the universe and gaze back at our home planet.

All told, space shuttles deployed 174 communication and scientific satellites over the 30 year program.

The shuttles' greatest accomplishment and purpose – just now complete – was the launch and construction of the International Space Station – our science laboratory in space and our foothold to the rest of the solar system.

She also led our cooperation and peaceful partnership with the Russians.

And she carried dozens of people from our partner nations.

The shuttle was also an experimental vehicle. Each flight taught us how to fly better and safer, and we are now translating its accomplishments into future missions.

More than 80% of the 500 people who have orbited the Earth did so aboard a space shuttle.

The first ever American woman and Americans of ethnic diversity flew on the space shuttle. More than 400 people flew on the shuttle. Many are here tonight, and I would like to ask you to stand and be recognized.

The shuttle helped us create a future where low Earth orbit became a place we could live and work and set the stage for our next journeys. It proved technologies such as the engines that are being used for preliminary testing on the heavy lift rocket that will take us beyond Earth. And as a spacefaring nation, it expanded our horizons. In short, the space program is alive and well because of the space shuttle and the men and women who supported and flew on it.

Like all great accomplishments, these achievements have come at a cost. When we lost the Challenger and Columbia flights and their brave crews, we rededicated ourselves to an even more meaningful and exciting future.

Today, NASA is following through on this commitment by building on the successes of the past and learning from our setbacks.

We are now on a course that will tap into the innovative spirit that makes this a great nation.

It will allow us to more fully utilize the shuttle-constructed ISS. And to explore farther than ever before

This path is allowing us to advance our technology, open new markets and create more aerospace jobs, making our industry (all of you) even more competitive and successful... increasing our economic and national security.

So, to those who say our best exploration days are behind us, I simply must disagree. While it is wonderful together as we do tonight to pay tribute to this amazing program... we must always continue to focus on the future.

You need only admire the amazing space shuttles and their accomplishments to realize that the people, organizations and nation that created them, have only just begun.

Today, all across the country, vehicles are being built with names like Orion, Dragon, CST-100, Liberty and Dreamchaser ... that will continue and expand on the space shuttle's many accomplishments.

Make no mistake about it, these programs will assure that the United States remains the world leader in space exploration.

So while we celebrate and pay tribute to the shuttle, tonight is not about the past, it's about a future she has made possible. It's about its successes that have allowed us to reach higher.

At NASA, we remain committed to deliver a space program that advances the human condition and the human spirit.

Bob, please lead us in a toast!