Remarks by

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Farnborough International Airshow

Farnborough, United Kingdom

July 15, 2014

I'm pleased to be here at Farnborough to sign a new Memorandum of Cooperation on behalf of the Federal Aviation Administration with the UK Department for Transport, the Civil Aviation Authority, and the UK Space Agency.

This non-binding agreement establishes a foundation for cooperation in commercial space transportation between the Federal Aviation Administration and the United Kingdom. The agreement covers several objectives, including the exchange of information on regulations, with a focus on enhancing public safety.

For over 50 years, human space flight has been in the realm of governments. That is now about to change. We are seeing the beginning of a new segment of the industry: commercial human spaceflight.

In the United States, this is happening with both orbital and suborbital vehicles.

My office has been preparing for commercial human space flight for some time now, and while there have only been a few suborbital flights since 2004, U.S. industry is poised to begin regular suborbital activity either late this year or next year, with orbital flights soon afterwards. The challenge of regulating this new industry is one in which the FAA does have some experience.

The Office of Commercial Space Transportation has licensed over 220 commercial space launches since 1989. Many of those were by expendable launch vehicles, but some have involved reusable launch vehicles. The first rules for reusable launch vehicles were issued in the year 2000. We released rules for crew and spaceflight participants in 2006, following Congressional passage of the Commercial Space Launch Amendments Act in 2004. In addition, the FAA has also licensed reentries from Earth orbit, such as the SpaceX capsules that have returned from the International Space Station.

You may have heard that the FAA approach for space transportation is different from aviation. Instead of certifying space transportation vehicles, the FAA licenses the operation. Our main focus is public safety.

The use of a licensing regime provides flexibility for the commercial space transportation industry to grow and develop. This approach has proven to be very effective for commercial expendable launch vehicles and it is also being used for the new orbital and suborbital vehicles designed to carry people. We believe that applying a certification regime that is similar to existing aviation regulations may stifle the emerging commercial human space transportation industry.

There are, of course, more things that can be done in making space transportation safer as the industry develops.

One of the objectives of the new FAA-UK memorandum is the sharing of established practices. Last year, my office released a document called "Draft Established Practices for Human Space Flight Occupant Safety."

This document is intended to facilitate discussions with stakeholders, with the hope of reaching a consensus between government, industry, and academia on best practices related to occupant safety. The document provides a framework and can serve as a benchmark for industry to use in developing industry consensus standards.

It can also serve as a starting point, if there is a need for the government to issue regulations at some point in the future.

The FAA hopes to release an updated version of these practices this summer that will address industry comments. I should note that there has been a fair amount of international interest in our proposed practices as new vehicles emerge in the U.S. and in Europe and new spaceports appear globally.

As you may know, under U.S. law, any U.S. person (or company) operating a launch vehicle inside or outside the United States would have to be licensed by the FAA.

As part of our international outreach activities and in accordance with the U.S. National Space Policy, we have been promoting the international adoption of FAA commercial space transportation regulations.

An important goal in our approach is compatibility or "interoperability" between countries.

As we've seen in aviation, incompatibility can cost a lot of time and effort to reconcile later. The less time governments have to spend on adjusting regulations to fit each system, the more time we can spend on setting up the right environment for industry to succeed, including for future Point to Point transportation through space.

I'd like to thank the Department for Transport, the Civil Aviation Authority, and the UK Space Agency for the opportunity to speak today, and I look forward to continuing our partnership in commercial space transportation.

Thank you.