

A New National Pastime

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Thank you, Will, and good morning everyone.

I don't know how many of you are baseball fans, but over the last several months, a lot of people in this town have been rediscovering the joys of what used to be called our National Pastime.

One of the reasons for that is that our local team, the Washington Nationals, had the best record in baseball this year. Having won the National League East Division, they are currently battling the St. Louis Cardinals, the defending World Series champions, in the playoffs. It's been a long time since Washington had a team go all the way and emerge victorious in the World Series. In fact, it has only happened once. Eighty-eight years ago today, on October 10, 1924, the Washington Senators defeated the New York Giants 4-3 in the bottom of the 12th inning, in the seventh game of the series, giving the hometown crowd something to celebrate.

Speaking of celebrations, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate a couple of the members of our commercial space transportation industry who had successful launches in the last week.

Armadillo Aerospace completed the first-ever FAA licensed launch from Spaceport America on Saturday, a very important milestone for our colleagues from New Mexico. And as I'm sure you are all aware, on Sunday evening, SpaceX launched a Falcon 9 rocket carrying a Dragon spacecraft on the first of a series of 12 Cargo Resupply Missions to the International Space Station. And the Dragon was successfully berthed with the ISS just this morning, so congratulations SpaceX!

If it seems to you like the pace of commercial space activities is starting to pick up a little bit, I'd have to agree. Let me take just a few minutes to review what has been going on since COMSTAC last got together back in May. In addition to the launches I just mentioned, there

were also three others: one Falcon 9 launch and two SeaLaunch missions. All together, that makes a grand total of 210 licensed launches, all completed without any fatalities, serious injuries, or significant property damage to the uninvolved public.

We recently issued updated launch licenses for the Falcon 9 and the STIG-B rockets, and a reentry license for the Dragon; we also granted an Experimental Permit to Scaled Composites for rocket-powered flights of SpaceShipTwo. We also gave NASTAR their second Safety Approval, this one for the Altitude Chamber they use in some of their training programs.

On the regulatory front, we recently published a notice of proposed rulemaking that is intended to eliminate the requirement to obtain a license or permit for tethered vehicle tests. We also issued a revision to our Explosive Siting Requirements in an effort to reduce the regulatory burden and to eliminate the potential for duplication with OSHA and other existing requirements. And we have initiated a series of public telecons to solicit inputs on what kind of regulatory framework for commercial human space flight may be needed at some point in the future.

Speaking of human space flight, in June the FAA and NASA signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding on Commercial Human Space Flight. The agreement detailed how the two agencies will work together on upcoming commercial crew missions. Specifically, for operational flights to the International Space Station, operators will be required to obtain a launch license from the FAA for public safety. Crew safety and mission assurance will be NASA's responsibility.

In August, we released the results of a study by the Tauri Group, co-sponsored by the FAA and Space Florida, on the market demand for suborbital reusable vehicles. The final report identified

several different markets for these vehicles, and described three different scenarios for how the market may grow over the next 10 years.

At the end of September we announced three new Spaceport Grants, totaling just under half a million dollars, to the East Kern Airport District at Mojave Air and Spaceport in California, the Front Range Airport Authority in Colorado, and the Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism.

All of us understand the importance of STEM education to meet our future workforce needs. So I am pleased to announce that the FAA recently completed an MOU with the Challenger Center in which we pledged to work together on programs to inspire young people to study math and science, and to help them experience the excitement of working on rockets and spacecraft.

Good things are continuing to happen at the universities that are a part of our Center of Excellence for Commercial Space Transportation. Examples of some of the tasks recently completed include “Flight Crew Medical Standards and Spaceflight Participant Medical Acceptance Guidelines for Commercial Space Flight”, and “Integration of Commercial Space Vehicle Traffic into the National Airspace System”. Final reports for both of these tasks can be found on the COE CST homepage on the web.

In addition to the nine universities that made up the original Center of Excellence, we recently began welcoming other schools and organizations into the partnership. For example, McGill University and Florida Institute of Technology have formed an “Affiliate Membership” relationship to enable us to bring additional talent to our team.

Last week, I had the opportunity to speak at the International Astronautical Congress in Naples. Among the many topics of interest was a discussion of the benefits of licensing, as opposed to certification, for authorizing commercial space flights. I was pleased to see that many other countries are beginning to see the merits of the regulatory regime that we have here in the United States, and are contemplating ways to adopt similar, or at least complementary systems, to what we have put in place at the FAA.

As the number of launches starts to increase, we think it will be very important for us to have knowledgeable people out in the field to oversee the operations, and to make sure we are doing our part to cut through the red tape and implement a streamlined license approval process. So in the future, to the extent that we are allowed to hire additional safety inspectors or flight safety analysts, most of them will be stationed out in the field. Currently, in addition to our staff here in Washington, we have employees located at or near both Patrick Air Force Base and the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, the Johnson Space Center in Houston, and Mojave and Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. Once SpaceShipTwo completes its test flights and moves out to Spaceport America, we'll be moving one of our folks from Mojave out to New Mexico. We have also assigned one of our support contractors to start spending some time at Wallops, in anticipation of an increase in launches out there.

Finally, for those of you who haven't heard, Jim Van Laak, who has been my Deputy for the last four years, has accepted an extended detail assignment at the National Institute of Aerospace in Hampton, Virginia. Jim's primary task while he is there will be to try and come up with a process to share lessons learned, and information on accidents, incidents, mishaps, and close

calls, in a manner that protects industry's concerns about proprietary data. That will be a challenging assignment, but it is something that we are going to have to figure out if we don't want every company to have to make the same mistakes all over again as the industry matures. Since Jim is going to be gone for quite a while, over the next couple of months we plan to post a Vacancy Announcement for a new Deputy Associate Administrator. As I'm sure you know, the government hiring process can take a while. So in the meantime, I have asked Pam Melroy to serve as our Acting Deputy Associate Administrator, and she has graciously agreed. It's really great to have someone with her background to help keep us on the right track during this critical time for commercial space.

We have a number of key issues that we are facing right now: getting indemnification renewed, figuring out how to take advantage of excess or underutilized government facilities, finalizing the National Space Transportation Policy, deciding whether AST (or some other government agency) needs on-orbit authority, coming to grips with the challenges of on-orbit debris and Space Traffic Management, and settling on an efficient method to authorize non-launch space-related operations in the National Air Space. Some of these issues may require legislative action or changes to our regulations. Others may require changes to national policy. That's why I am so happy to have Ed Feddeman here with us this morning to give us his perspective on how things look on Capitol Hill. For all of you COMSTAC members, I want you to know that I really appreciate your help in trying to resolve these issues. They are tough, but they are important. And we all need to work together if we are to have any hope of succeeding.

When I began my talk this morning, I mentioned that baseball used to be known as our National Pastime. So exactly what is a National Pastime? Well, it's an activity that serves to make time pass agreeably, that is considered to be an intrinsic part of the culture of a nation. These days, some might argue that football meets that definition, while others would make the case for basketball.

Wouldn't it be neat if instead of focusing on a sport or a game, our National Pastime involved parking your car outside the fence at your local spaceport, and spending the afternoon watching a daily series of rocket launches, one after another?

It could happen someday if we work on it. Shall we give it a try?

Thanks for being here today. I'm looking forward to some very productive discussions.