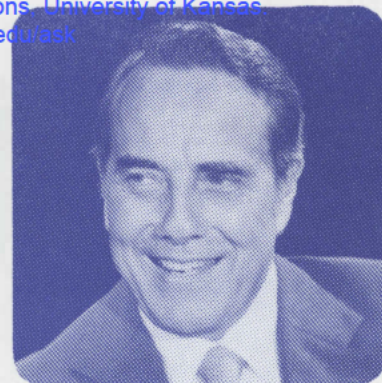


News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE

SHUTTLE COMMISSION REPORT

TODAY MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON THE SPACE SHUTTLE CHALLENGER ACCIDENT PRESENTED THEIR REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT. AT A WHITE HOUSE CEREMONY THIS AFTERNOON, SEVERAL SENATORS, INCLUDING OUR DISTINGUISHED ASTRONAUT COLLEAGUES JOHN GLENN AND JAKE GARN, JOINED THE PRESIDENT AT THIS IMPORTANT EVENT. WE ARE PLEASED THE COMMISSION HAS COMPLETED ITS WORK AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO REVIEWING IT. IT IS AN IN-DEPTH REPORT THAT WILL REQUIRE DETAILED STUDY BY THE EXPERTS. AND THE SENATE IS DOING JUST THAT -- THE COMMERCE COMMITTEE AND ITS DISTINGUISHED CHAIRMAN, SENATOR DANFORTH, WILL BEGIN HEARINGS TOMORROW ON THIS REPORT.

IN MY VIEW, UNTIL WE HAVE TIME TO DIGEST IT, AND UNTIL WE HEAR FROM THE EXPERTS, WE SHOULD HOLD OUR FIRE -- LET'S NOT RUSH TO JUDGMENT. OUR SPACE PROGRAM IS HANGING IN THE BALANCE. THE COMMISSION INDICATES THAT THE NATION'S WORST SPACE DISASTER WAS A COMBINATION OF FAULTY SPACE AGE HARDWARE AND POOR MANAGEMENT AT THE NATION'S SPACE AGENCY. THE REPORT CONTAINS ABOUT A DOZEN MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE AGENCY AND THE SHUTTLE PROGRAM AND WILL SAY THAT CHALLENGER'S SEVEN ASTRONAUTS DIED BECAUSE HOT GASES ESCAPED FROM THE SEAM OF THE SHUTTLE'S RIGHT BOOSTER ROCKET, TRIGGERING A CHAIN REACTION THAT ENDED IN A GIGANTIC FIREBALL. THESE ARE GRIM ACCOUNTS THAT DEMAND THE MOST CAREFUL DELIBERATIONS WE CAN MUSTER.

ALL AMERICANS WERE DEEPLY SADDENED BY THE LOSS OF THE CHALLENGER AND ITS CREW ON THAT FATEFUL DAY. IT WAS A PERSONAL LOSS TO ALL OF US, AND PARTICULARLY TO THE DEDICATED MEN AND WOMEN DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE SHUTTLE PROJECT. SINCE THAT TIME,

(MORE)

NASA HAS TAKEN SOME HARD KNOCKS; THERE HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS CHARGES AIMED AT NASA. SOME OF THEM MAY BE DESERVED, OTHERS MAY BE JUST THE PRODUCT OF POLITICAL RHETORIC. THAT'S WHY TODAY'S REPORT IS IMPORTANT. IT GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP AN UNBIASED EVALUATION OF WHAT REALLY HAPPENED ON JANUARY 28.

BUT, AS DEVASTATING AS THE CHALLENGER LOSS WAS, IT SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO BLUR OUR VISION OF THE FUTURE, NOR SHOULD IT SOUR OUR TASTE FOR DISCOVERY. WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY -- TOGETHER -- TO BECOME THE WORLD LEADER IN SPACE EXPLORATION. NASA HAS HELPED FILL THE NATION WITH PRIDE AND HAS HELPED GIVE US THE PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES. I BELIEVE THAT NASA SHOULD, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BEGIN PRODUCTION OF A FOURTH ORBITER TO REPLACE THE CHALLENGER; A PROJECT INCORPORATING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION, BUT ALSO EMBODYING THE HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF A NATION READY AND WILLING TO PUSH INTO OUTER SPACE. THE SPACE SHUTTLE IS THE NATION'S DOOR TO OUTER SPACE; LONG LAUNCH DELAYS WILL ONLY MEAN THAT IMPORTANT COMMERCIAL, MILITARY AND SCIENTIFIC PAYLOADS WILL ALSO BE DELAYED. NASA, WITH THE SUPPORT OF CONGRESS, SHOULD MOVE QUICKLY TO CORRECT THE PROBLEMS OUTLINED BY THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION AND GET THE SHUTTLE PROGRAM MOVING AGAIN.

THE GRIEF OVER THE LOSS OF THE CHALLENGER 7 WILL BE WITH US ALWAYS, BUT THE BEST TRIBUTE WE CAN MAKE IS TO REACH AGAIN FOR THE HEAVENS.

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