

The New NASA Space Flight Center at Huntsville, Alabama

On October 21st, 1959 the President announced his intention to transfer the Development Operations Division of the Army Ballistic Missile Agency located at Huntsville, Alabama, to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in order that the special capabilities of this team led by Dr. Wernher von Braun might be used to strengthen the expanding civilian space program. The specific plans and details will be presented to the Congress when it reconvenes.

The new Space Flight Center at Huntsville will become a major unit of the NASA field organization having the major responsibility for space booster vehicle systems work, including appropriate research and development related to the mission, and ultimately substantial responsibility for NASA launch operations.

Organizationally NASA hopes to move toward a three-part organization: (a) a laboratory research and development arm, (b) a payload development and operations arm, and (c) a space vehicle development and operations arm. The new Center at Huntsville will ultimately become the field agency of the space vehicle development and operations arm of NASA.

The plan to be reported to the Congress provides for the transfer to NASA of personnel, facilities and equipment of the Development Operations Division and of appropriate supporting organizations in sufficient numbers and quantities to provide NASA with a substantially independent operating research and development organization and capability. The new Center will thus become an independent unit under the administrative and technical control of NASA. It will have the same independent status as other research centers of NASA located on military reservations, such as the Langley Research Center, Langley Field, Va. and the Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, Calif.

The new Center occupies a self-contained area of 1130 acres, comprising a group of laboratory facilities valued at approximately \$100 million. About 5500 persons will constitute the personnel complement of the new Center, including a large number of talented scientists and engineers who have had long experience in the development of rocket vehicles and in space exploration. The center will be directed by Dr. Wernher von Braun, whose leadership and personal contributions to space exploration are well known.

It has been suggested that the new Space Flight Center be given the name, Marshall Space Flight Center in honor of General George C. Marshall. This has seemed appropriate for many reasons. The mission of NASA is the scientific research in and exploration of space for peaceful purposes. The new Center comes to NASA from the Army and its personnel have long been associated with the Army. It seems fitting therefore to honor a great military leader whose life was dedicated to the cause of peace, who initiated the Marshall Plan, who won the Nobel Peace Prize, and who served our country as Secretary of State. The bestowal of his name on the new Center would not only honor his character, his leadership, and his dedication to public service but also serve as a continuing reminder to those associated with the laboratory to follow his example.

Hugh L. Dryden, NASA
December 18, 1959