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Shuttle mission ends abruptly

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shuttle flights and more shuttle crews and, yes, more volunteers, more civilians, more teachers in space."

He added: "Nothing stops here." NASA delayed its announcement that there appeared to be no survivors until it had conducted search-and-rescue efforts. Even before Moore's statement, it seemed impossible anyone could have survived such a cataclysm.

The crew included McAuliffe and six NASA astronauts: commander Francis R. Scobee, 46, pilot Michael J. Smith, 40; Judith Resnik, 36; Ronald E. McNair, 35; Ellison S. Onizuka, 39; and Gregory B. Jarvis, 41. "I regret that I have to report that based on very preliminary searches of the ocean where the Challenger impacted this morning, these searches have not revealed any evidence that the crew of Challenger survived," Moore, NASA associate administrator, told a midafternoon news conference.

Col. John Shults, director of Defense Department contingency operations here, said a search armada of helicopters, ships and planes had spotted several pieces of debris floating in the Atlantic.

The president watched video replays in "stunned silence," and sent Vice President George Bush here to convey his sympathies to the families of the crew.

Glenn said, "I guess we always knew there would be a day like this." A congressional investigation was immediately announced, but many lawmakers were quick to express support for the nation's manned space effort.

Lost along with the \$1.2 billion spacecraft were a \$100-million satellite that was to have become an important part of NASA's space-based shuttle communications network and a smaller \$10 million payload that was to have studied Halley's comet.

It was the second disaster to strike NASA's pioneering space program. In January 1967 astronauts Virgil "Gus" Grissom, Edward White and Roger Chaffee burned to death while preparing for an Apollo flight when a fire destroyed their capsule during a training drill.

Four Soviet cosmonauts have died in space accidents — one in 1967 and three in 1971.

Challenger's final seconds went like this: "Go at throttle up," flight directors told Challenger's crew, noting the ship had achieved full engine

power. "Roger, go at throttle up," said Mike Smith, the pilot.

Seconds later, an explosion followed by the devastating space age fireball.

At Mission Control, there was silence. Debris cut white swatches through the sky, falling into the Atlantic Ocean. One of the booster rockets was seen floating down on its parachute.

Spectators, including the parents of McAuliffe and family members of the six astronauts, watched in helpless horror in the frosty fields at Kennedy Space Center.

"Obviously a major malfunction," was the first word from NASA, following seconds of agonized silence.

As Challenger fell in pieces, debris was so heavy that for several minutes NASA directed rescue craft to stay out of the area.

Launch, scheduled for 9:38 a.m. EST, was delayed two hours while officials analyzed the possibility that foot-long launch-pad icicles might cause problems. But after liftoff, at 11:38 a.m., the NASA commentator, Nesbitt, reported system were normal.

"Three engines running normally," he noted. "Three good fuel cells. Three good APUs (auxiliary power units). Velocity 2,057 feet per second (1400 miles per hour), altitude 4.3 nautical miles (4.9 statute miles), downrange distance 3 nautical miles (3.4 statute miles).

"Engines throttling up, three engines now 104 percent (normal)." Then the final exchange with pilot Smith. Then the explosion.

NASA cameras were trained on the spaceship. While slow-speed replays did not pinpoint the source of the explosion, from one angle it seemed it might have come at one of the boosters, the two rockets that provide the ship its initial boost to space before peeling away to Earth.

Stressing that he was only speculating, Glenn said, "What I thought I saw was the first flame coming out of the solid (rocket booster)."

After that initial blast, the slow motion showed an explosion of the huge external fuel tank, which carried half-a-million gallons of super-cold, super-volatile liquid oxygen and hydrogen. Challenger, dwarfed by the fuel tank, burst into pieces which rained into the Atlantic for 45 minutes.

The NASA administrator, William R. Graham, was briefing members of Congress on the agency budget and watched the tragedy on television. Two members who had

flown recent missions, Sen. Jake Garn and Rep. William Nelson, D-Fla., expressed shock.

Garn, clearly shaken, emphasized his belief that "We should proceed with the program, and that would include the civilians in space program as well."

The Tuesday launch was to be the second of 15 this year — by far the most ambitious schedule in NASA's four-year-plus shuttle program. Garn said the obvious — that operations must be frozen for as long as it takes NASA to investigate and understand what went wrong.

Challenger, the second of the agency's four ships to fly, was making its 10th flight, more than any of the other shuttles.

NASA has rescue plans should a shuttle be forced to land in the ocean, but there are no ejection seats that might propel an astronaut from safety in the event of mid-air disaster.

Challenger had risen spectacularly off a brand new launch pad at 11:38 a.m. EST, after a series of weather and technical delays, and was climbing smoothly trailing a 700-foot pillar of fire when the explosion hit.

Half an hour after the explosion, a wisp of white smoke, blown by upper winds, still marked the path of the shuttle's wreckage.

The explosion occurred about the time Challenger was to enter a period of maximum aerodynamic pressure when wind and other atmospheric conditions would place the maximum force on the outside of the vehicle.

The purpose of the mission was to release and retrieve one satellite to study Halley's comet and launch another to become part of the space-based shuttle communications network.

Nominee's names given

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Walker, vice president for development at A&M.

McKenzie could not say whether the board is leaning toward someone from within the System.

"I cannot state that because we're not," McKenzie said. "We're going to seek the most qualified person."

The search committee, which also includes Regents Henry Cisneros and John Mobley, hired Ward Howell, a Dallas executive search firm, to help with the search.

Police beat

The following incidents were reported to the Texas A&M University Police Department through Monday:

MISDEMEANOR THEFT:

- Two wire spoke hub caps were stolen from a 1981 Oldsmobile Omega parked in PA 61.

- Two hubcaps were stolen from a 1979 Volvo parked in PA 51.

- A front wheel was stolen from a Raleigh bicycle parked near Goodwin Hall.

- A car cover was stolen from a 1985 Oldsmobile Cutlas parked in PA 61.

- Two rings, a diamond and opal ring and a James Avery ring, were stolen from a room in Mosher Hall.

- Two wheels, rims and center caps were stolen from a Monte Carlo parked in PA 56.

FELONY THEFT:

- A 1982 Chevrolet pickup was stolen from PA 71.

BURGLARY OF A HABITATION:

- About \$122 was stolen from purses from a room in Krueger Hall.

BURGLARY OF A MOTOR VEHICLE:

- A Sanyo Model FTE-15 cassette receiver, six Pioneer speakers and a Cobra radar detector were stolen from a 1979 VW Scirocco parked in PA 24.

- An Alpine stereo and two Sony speakers were stolen from a 1976 VW Scirocco parked in PA 56.

CRIMINAL MISCHIEF:

- Someone cut all the carburetor hoses and pipes of a 1972 VW Bug parked in PA 61.

- Someone threw the 15-foot Alpha Tau Omega chair into the Rudder Tower fountain.

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Schedule

Friday, January 31
noon-1 pm -- Registration
1-5 pm -- Introduction and Concepts

Saturday, February 1
8 am-5 pm -- 7 Steps to Selling

Sunday, February 2
1-4:30 pm -- Seven minute presentations plus lectures on memorization. Interviewing techniques, resumes, etc.
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