



# CONR - 1 AF/AFNORTH

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## CONR supports final space shuttle launch

**CAPE CANAVERAL AIR FORCE STATION, Fla.** – Thousands of spectators anxiously looked on as Space Shuttle Atlantis roared to life for the last time launching the orbiter and crew over the space coast of Florida at 11:29 a.m. EST.

The Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region and Air Forces Northern provided crucial airspace control and shuttle support to the final launch of Space Shuttle Atlantis.

"AFNORTH and CONR have two separate missions supporting the launch," said Maj. Gen. Garry C. Dean, CONR-AFNORTH commander. "For the air defense piece, or CONR piece, we patrol the skies overhead the shuttle; and for the AFNORTH piece we provide the manning for potential search and rescue operations should the astronauts need to bail out of the orbiter."



CONR ensured airspace sovereignty by enforcing the Federal Aviation Administration's temporary flight restriction area established around Kennedy Space Center. Using F-15E aircraft from the 4th Fighter Wing, Seymour Johnson, Air Force Base, N.C., CONR performed its Operation Noble Eagle mission.

CONR also supported launch operations by deploying the Joint-Based Expeditionary Connectivity Center team to Cape Canaveral to provide a comprehensive air picture to the entire launch team partners.

"By bringing in multiple real-time radar pictures, the JBECC is able create an integrated air picture that is forwarded by our tactical data link support to the fighters patrolling the airspace around Shuttle Atlantis," said Maj. Renae Wright, JBECC Operations director. "This is the 18th shuttle launch that JBECC has supported. I am very proud of the JBECC team and the mission we support."

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The JBECC, assigned to the 601st Air & Space Operations Center located at Tyndall AFB, Fla., is a highly mobile, rapidly deployable, communications system that networks multiple real-time radar sensors and correlates their data into an improved air picture for the warfighter. This capability enables NORAD to better detect, track, identify, and prosecute any airborne aircraft, cruise missile, unmanned aerial vehicle, or remotely piloted vehicle.

AFNORTH provided the headquarters manning for U.S. Northern Command's Joint Task Force-Space Transportation System, responsible for the search and rescue of the astronauts and recovery of the orbiter if the need arises. AFNORTH also serves as the operational level focal point for providing mission awareness and crisis response to space shuttle mission contingencies.

The task force provided the command and control of Department of Defense forces during crisis response operations from the Morrell Operations Center at Cape Canaveral AFS.

"This Joint Task Force plays a significant role in NASA's shuttle program, a program that has been in place for 30 years," said Navy Capt. James Hineline, JTF-STS commander. "There are many moving parts and close coordination among key players that has to happen to ensure a successful launch. CONR, Joint Task Force - Space Transportation System, our C-130 aircraft and Pave Hawk helicopters at Patrick AFB, Fla., and the 114th Range Operations Squadron here at the Cape make up a lot of that coordination."

The 114th Range Operations Squadron at Patrick AFB, provided range safety and tracking support for Shuttle launches occurring on the Eastern Range.

"Prior to lift-off, the 114th coordinates with CONR and the Eastern Air Defense Sector to ensure there is transparency between the Operation Noble Eagle air patrols and range operations," said Lt. Col. Julia Black, launch safety officer. "In the case of a shuttle search and rescue scenario, AFNORTH members on JTF-STS would work with 114th range operators to maneuver forces as quickly and safely as possible to locate the astronauts."

The 114th ROS mission is to provide support to the 45th Space Wing during Eastern Range launches and to operate and maintain the Ballistic Missile Range Safety Technology program.

"As NASA's manned space shuttle program comes to an end, I must say it has been a true honor to have been a part of a program that has shaped our history," said General Dean. "Joint Task Force - Space Transportation System, the men and women of CONR, AFNORTH, and all the other supporting agencies have done an outstanding job supporting the shuttle program, and as a commander I couldn't be more proud."