

Expedition 3 returns home

EXPEDITION 3 COMMANDER FRANK L. CULBERTSON, JR.



Expedition 3 Commander Frank L. Culbertson, Jr., has the distinction of being the only American who was not on Earth when the Sept. 11 tragedies occurred. After the day's events, Culbertson wrote about being so far from home at such a tragic moment in history.

Here are some of Culbertson's thoughts regarding September 11:

I haven't written very much about specifics of this mission during the month I've been here, mainly for two reasons: The first being that there has been very little time to do that kind of writing, and secondly because I'm not sure how comfortable I am sharing thoughts I share with family and friends with the rest of the world.

Well, obviously the world changed today. What I say or do is very minor compared to the significance of what happened to our country today when it was attacked by ... by whom? Terrorists are all we know, I guess. (It's) hard to know at whom to direct our anger and fear.

I had just finished a number of tasks this morning, the most time-consuming being the physical exams of all crew members. In a private conversation following that, the flight surgeon told me they were having a very bad day on the ground. I had no idea. He described the situation to me as best he knew it at -0900 CDT. I was flabbergasted, then horrified. My first thought was that this wasn't a real conversation - that I was still listening to one of my Tom Clancy tapes. It just didn't seem possible on this scale in our country. I couldn't even imagine the particulars, even before the news of further destruction began coming in.

Vladimir came over pretty quickly, sensing that something very serious was being discussed. I waved Michael into the module as well. They were amazed and stunned. After we signed off, I tried to explain to Vladimir and Michael as best I could the potential magnitude of this act of terror in downtown Manhattan and at the Pentagon. They clearly understood and were very sympathetic. I glanced at the World Map on the computer to see where over the world we were and noticed that we were coming southeast out of Canada and would be passing over New England in a few minutes. I zipped around the station until I found a window that would give me a view of NYC and grabbed the nearest camera. It happened to be a video camera, and I was looking south from the window of Michael's cabin.

The smoke seemed to have an odd bloom to it at the base of the column that was streaming south of the city. After reading one of the news articles we just received, I believe we were looking at NY around the time of, or shortly after, the collapse of the second tower. How horrible. I panned the camera all along the East Coast to the south to see if I could see any other smoke around Washington, or anywhere else, but nothing was visible.

It was pretty difficult to think about work after that, though we had some to do, but on the next orbit we crossed the US further south. All three of us were working one or two cameras to try to get views of New York or Washington. There was haze over Washington, but no specific source could be seen. It all looked incredible from two to three hundred miles away. I can't imagine the tragic scenes on the ground.

Other than the emotional impact of our country being attacked and thousands of our citizens, and maybe some friends, being killed, the most overwhelming feeling being where I am is one of isolation.

To read more of Culbertson's thoughts about Sept. 11, 2001, go to: <http://spaceflight.nasa.gov/station/crew/exp3/culbertsonletter.html>



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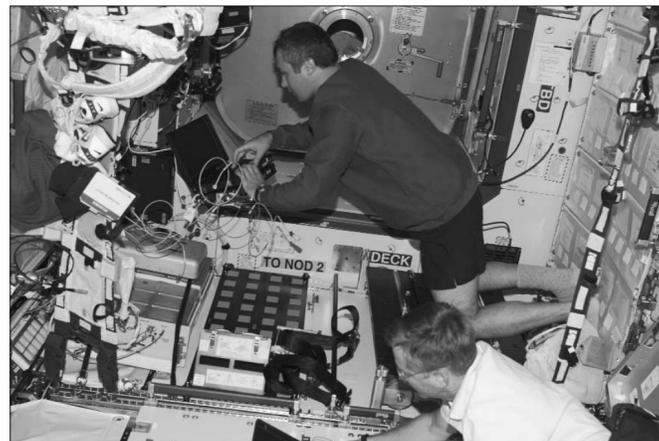
To prepare for their lengthy stay on the International Space Station (ISS), Dezhurov, Tyurin and Culbertson participate in mission training in one of the high fidelity trainers/mockups in the Systems Integration Facility at JSC. The three are seated on the mid deck for an emergency egress training session.



Cosmonaut Vladimir Dezhurov prepares the Russian Orlan space suit for a spacewalk from the Pirs Docking Compartment.



During some down time, Cosmonaut Mikhail Tyurin plays a guitar among storage bags in the hatch area of the Quest Airlock.



Culbertson (bottom) and Dezhurov perform routine tasks in the Destiny laboratory on the ISS.

Expedition 3 Commander Frank Culbertson, Pilot Vladimir Dezhurov and Flight Engineer Mikhail Tyurin, returned Dec. 17 from a 129-day stint aboard the International Space Station on STS-108.

Here are some highlights from Expedition 3's mission:

- ❖ The Volatile Organic Analyzer (VOA) was installed and activated. The VOA is designed to sample the air inside the ISS, detecting and identifying any possible contaminants.
- ❖ A wiring check enabled the treadmill to be used for exercise sessions on board.
- ❖ An orientation allowed the station's solar arrays to receive maximum sunlight.
- ❖ The grown colon, kidney and ovarian cancer cell research project was completed.
- ❖ The PuFF experiment began, studying the lungs of an astronaut over the duration of a space flight.
- ❖ The 16-foot-long Russian Pirs module docked with the ISS, providing the station with a new airlock and docking port.

- ❖ Spinal cord experiments continued to study reflexes of long-duration space flight, as well as physical examinations done periodically to gauge the effects of weightlessness.
- ❖ New science experiments included the ability of certain chemical compounds to impede the formation of kidney stones using ingested pills. The crew also continued testing the Active Rack Isolation System in its ability to protect experiments from crew activity.
- ❖ Three space walks finished connecting Pirs with the rest of the station.
- ❖ A fourth space walk by Pilot Dezhurov and Tyurin removed debris in the form of a rubberized seal from the docking interface between a Russian Progress re-supply craft and the Zvezda Service Module that delayed the launch of STS-108 and the arrival of Expedition 4.



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The Expedition 3 crew is comprised of Culbertson (center), who served as commander, and Tyurin (left) and Dezhurov, both flight engineers who represented Rosaviakosmos.



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Fans of Commander Culbertson show their support at the Ellington crew return event on Dec. 19.

WELCOME HOME MR. FRANK! WE MISSED YOU
 Jennifer Radik, Chance, Melissa Chibe & Bailey Hurt