

NASA chief views history-making SpaceX capsule (Update)

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NASA Administrator Charles Bolden, left, and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, right, answer questions in front of the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft Wednesday June 13, 2012 at the SpaceX Rocket Development Facility in McGregor, Texas. The spacecraft recently made history as the first commercial vehicle to visit the International Space Station. The California-based SpaceX is the first private business to send a cargo ship to the space station. (AP Photo/Waco Tribune-Herald, Duane A. Laverty)

(AP) — Marred by just a few scorch marks from its re-entry to the

Earth's atmosphere, the world's first commercial supply spacecraft to visit the International Space Station weathered its maiden voyage well, NASA and SpaceX officials said Wednesday.

"It's almost untouched," SpaceX Chief Executive Elon Musk said as he looked at the Dragon capsule, which was on display at the company's rocket factory in McGregor. The large, bell-shaped craft is more than 14 feet (4.27 meters) high and 12 feet (3.66 meters) in diameter.

Last month, the unmanned SpaceX Dragon delivered 1,000 pounds (453.6 kilograms) of provisions — mostly food — to the space station and returned with nearly 1,400 pounds (635.04 kilograms) of old equipment and a handful of experiments. Because it was a nine-day test flight, NASA did not load it with anything valuable.



NASA Administrator Charles Bolden, left, and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, right, stand in front of the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft Wednesday June 13, 2012 at the SpaceX Rocket Development Facility in McGregor, Texas. The spacecraft

recently made history as the first commercial vehicle to visit the International Space Station. The California-based SpaceX is the first private business to send a cargo ship to the space station. (AP Photo/Waco Tribune-Herald, Duane A. Lavery)

The California-based SpaceX — formally named Space Exploration Technologies Corp. — is the first private business to send a cargo ship to the space station. The company hopes to launch another capsule in September.

Musk said that a site near Brownsville in South Texas is the leading candidate for SpaceX's latest spaceport. He and Texas Gov. Rick Perry met later Wednesday to discuss incentives and other issues.

Musk said other launch sites under consideration — in Florida and Puerto Rico — had made stronger cases than Texas, "but that may be changing."



FILE- This Thursday, May 31, 2012 file photo, provided by SpaceX shows the Dragon spacecraft on a boat in the Pacific Ocean. The head of the U.S. space agency is visiting the history-making SpaceX Dragon capsule after its historic trip to the International Space Station. The world's first commercial supply ship returned to Earth last month. (AP Photo/SpaceX, File)

Perry spokeswoman Lucy Nashed said the meeting went well. Perry and Musk discussed Texas' interest in the project and commitment to working with SpaceX to find a good location for the spaceport in the state, Nashed said.

"Locating this new facility in Texas would be a natural fit," Nashed said in a statement.

NASA Administrator Charles Bolden praised SpaceX and the Dragon, saying last month's flight was a success that had taken much time and hard work. Bolden said the capsule was "beaten up" during re-entry but is robust.

"Sometimes, something bad is going to happen, but when it does ... they will bounce back," Bolden said, referring to SpaceX. "NASA is with you."



NASA Administrator Charles Bolden, left, and SpaceX CEO and Chief Designer Elon Musk, view the historic Dragon capsule that returned to Earth on May 31 following the first successful mission by a private company to carry supplies to the International Space Station on Wednesday, June 13, 2012 at the SpaceX facility in McGregor, Texas. It was the first time since the space shuttles stopped flying last summer that NASA got back a big load from the space station. SpaceX hopes to launch another capsule in September. (AP Photo/NASA, Bill Ingalls)

President Barack Obama is leading the move to commercial spaceflight. He wants routine orbital flights turned over to private businesses so the federal space agency can work on sending astronauts to Mars and asteroids.

NASA has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in seed money to vying companies, including SpaceX. It received nearly \$400 million as part of its contract with NASA to develop the capability to carry cargo to the space station and back, including the recently completed Dragon flight, said company spokeswoman Kirstin Brost Grantham.

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