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Contact: Patricia Woodside
 Director, Public Relations
 (703) 396-6304
pwoodside@aurora.aero

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Roland Tibbetts, SBA Administrator Karen Mills, and Aurora Chief Scientist Javier de Luis at the White House for 2013 Awards ceremony.

Aurora Flight Sciences Receives SBA’s Tibbetts Award

MANASSAS, VA, May 21, 2013 — Aurora Flight Sciences was honored by the Small Business Administration with its Tibbetts Award which recognizes technological innovation made possible through the federal government’s Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. The award is named for Roland Tibbetts, who is acknowledged as the father of the SBIR program, and is presented to companies and individuals that promote the mission and goals of the SBIR and STTR programs.

Aurora’s Research and Development Center in Cambridge was selected for its work on the SPHERES program, which was funded by DARPA and NASA over a ten-year period using 14 SBIR and STTR contract awards. SPHERES is a controls laboratory consisting of three small satellites onboard the International Space Station which allows engineers and scientists to develop algorithms for precision spaceflight operations including rendezvous, docking and station keeping.

SPHERES is also utilized by middle school and high school students in the nationwide Zero Robotics Competition which encourages the next generation to pursue careers in math, science and engineering. Aurora Flight Sciences worked closely with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to design, build and operate SPHERES, which evolved from the capstone undergraduate engineering course at MIT’s Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

“Aurora is thrilled to be selected for the Tibbetts Award which recognizes the role of the federal government in stimulating technological innovation,” said Dr. Javier de Luis, Aurora’s Vice President for Research and Development. “SPHERES was designed, built and flown in space because of a decade-long partnership with NASA and DARPA made possible by the SBIR and STTR programs.”

The Tibbetts Award was presented by SBA Administrator Karen Mills, and U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu, Chair of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, in a ceremony held at the White House on May 16, 2013. Aurora’s founder and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. John Langford, was an individual recipient of the SBA’s Tibbetts Award in 1996.

About Aurora Flight Sciences

Aurora Flight Sciences designs and builds aerospace vehicles for commercial and military applications. Aurora is headquartered in Manassas, VA and operates production facilities in Bridgeport, WV and Columbus, MS as well as a Research and Development Center in Cambridge, MA. To learn more about Aurora please visit our website at www.aurora.aero.

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