

High Fidelity Aerospace Simulations at NASA Ames SimLabs

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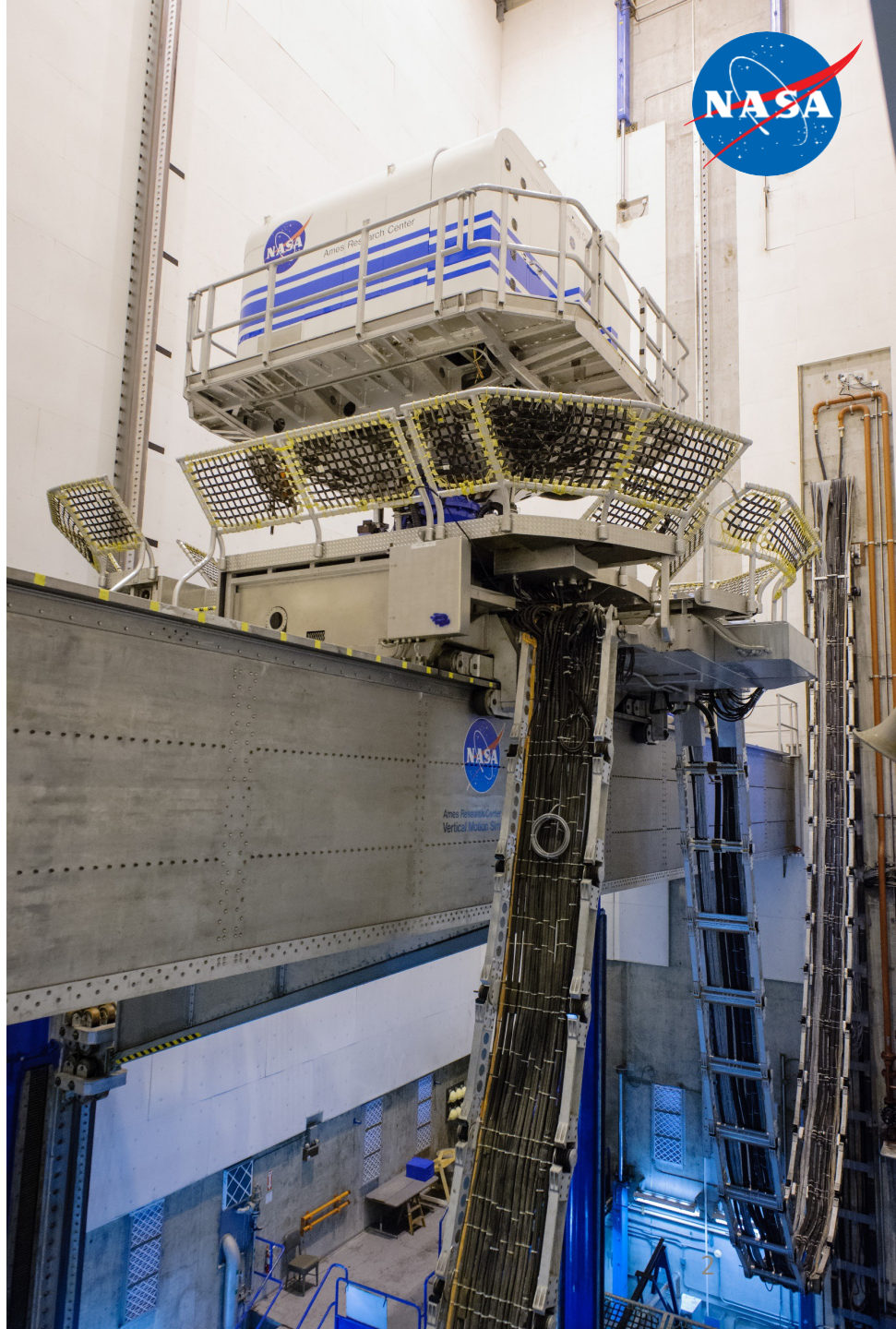
Outline

- SimLabs Facilities
- Vertical Motion Simulator
- Research and Training Overview
- Future Visual System and AR/VR

www.nasa.gov/simlabs



SimLabs Facilities

Unique high-fidelity simulation facilities capable of a wide range of aerospace systems research

Vertical Motion Simulator





Future Flight Central



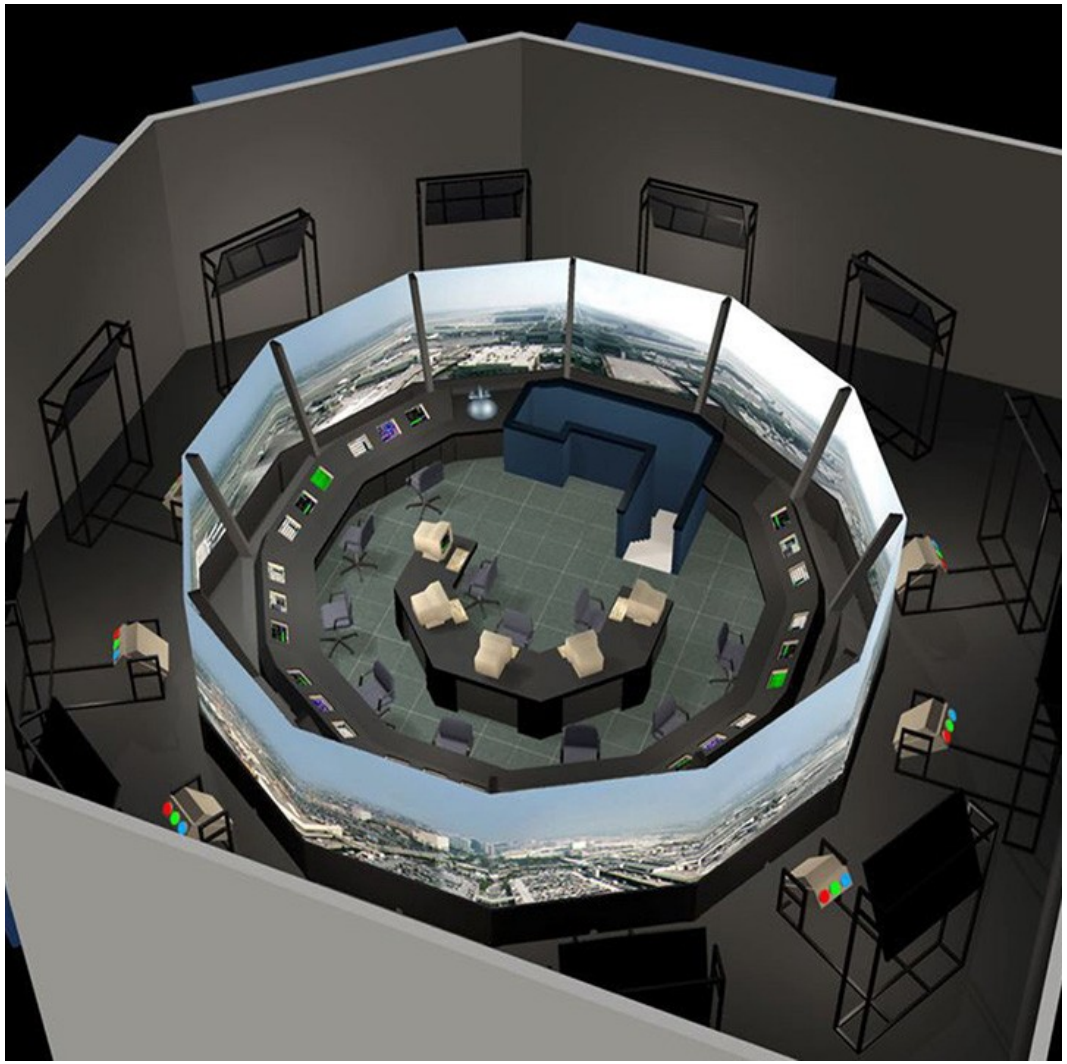


Crew-Vehicle Systems Research Facility





Future Flight Central







Crew-Vehicle Systems Research Facility







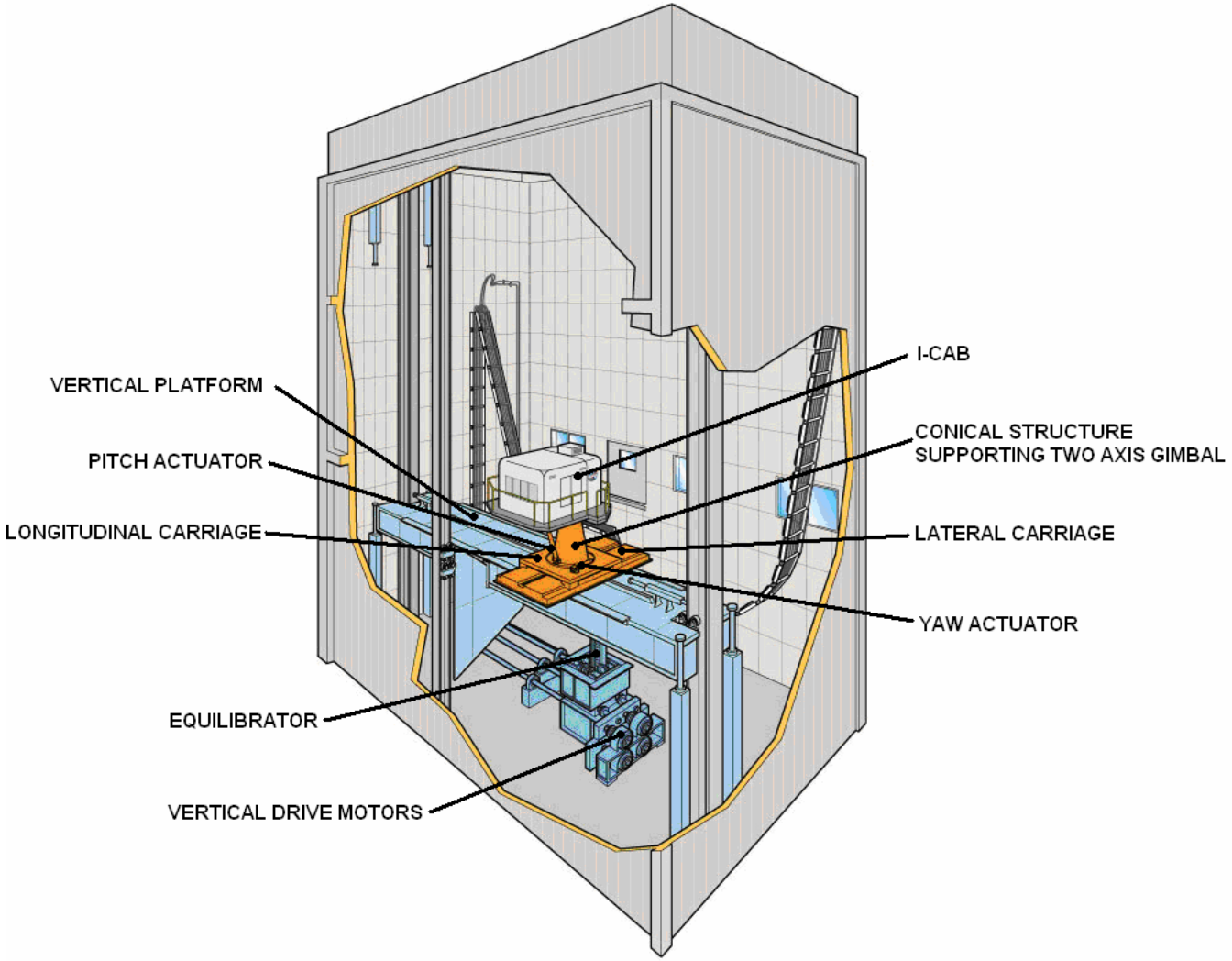
Vertical Motion Simulator

VMS was commissioned in 1979

- Originally designed to support Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTOL) and Short Take-Off and Landing (STOL) research
- First simulation study was in 1980, investigating the Space Shuttle Pilot-Induced Oscillation (PIO) issue

325+ simulation studies conducted, primarily for research in:

- Handling Qualities of Aircraft and Spacecraft
- Flight Controls and Displays
- Simulation Fidelity



VMS Motion Characteristics

Largest motion travel of any ground-based flight simulator

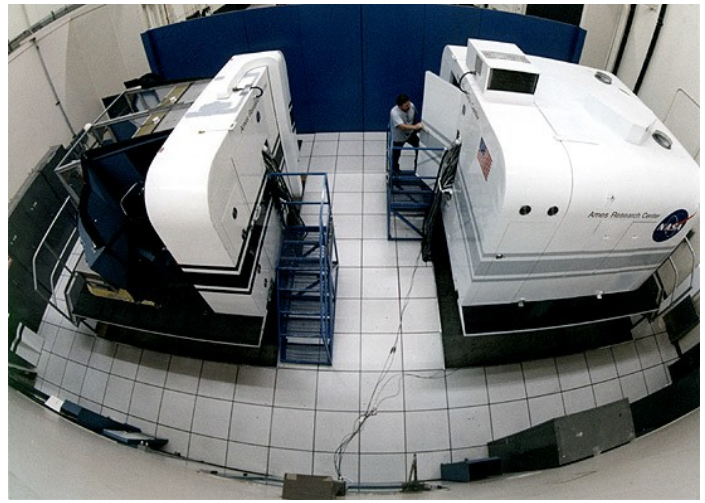
- Six independent degrees-of-freedom
- Combination of electric and hydraulic drives
- 60 ft vertical travel, 40 ft lateral travel

VMS Nominal Motion Limits			
Axis	**Displacement (ft)**	**Velocity (ft/s)**	**Acceleration (ft/s^2)**
Vertical	**± 30**	**16**	**24 (0.75 g)**
Lateral	**± 20**	**8**	**16 (0.5 g)**
Longitudinal	**± 4**	**4**	**10 (0.3 g)**
	(deg)	**(deg/s)**	**(deg/s^2)**
Roll	**± 18**	**40**	**115**
Pitch	**± 18**	**40**	**115**
Yaw	**± 24**	**46**	**115**



VMS Features

- Interchangeable cabs
  - Five cabs with varying visual fields-of-view and cockpit layouts
  - Two fixed-base labs for simulation development
  - Programmable multi-function displays
  - Programmable force-feel systems with a variety of inceptors
- High-fidelity visual systems
  - Wide-angle collimated display optics for improved depth perception
  - Customizable visual databases
- Flexible simulation architecture
  - Tailored to research applications
  - Accepts user software and hardware modules
  - Conduct multiple simulations concurrently
  - Can be used in larger distributed simulations





Vertical Motion Simulator in Action

VMS movie

https://www.nasa.gov/lunar-simulation

Space Shuttle Program



- VMS has supported the Shuttle program with research and training for its entire 30-year operational lifetime

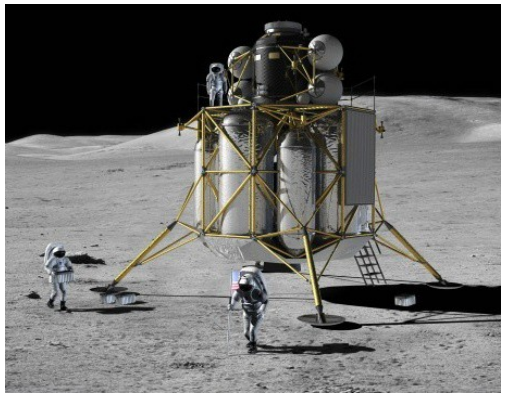
- All Shuttle pilot astronauts have trained on the VMS
  - Typical approach, landing, and rollout simulations (KSC, Dryden, White Sands)
  - Abort-on-Ascent simulations (21 landing sites)
  - Simulation of expanded off-nominal conditions (e.g., tire/brake failure, HUD misalignment)
  - Over 10,000 training runs performed

- VMS has been used as a platform for numerous Shuttle engineering studies
  - Quickly test new concepts at a high level and determine if they merit further investigation
  - 85 Shuttle engineering studies performed that led to 20+ flight rule changes

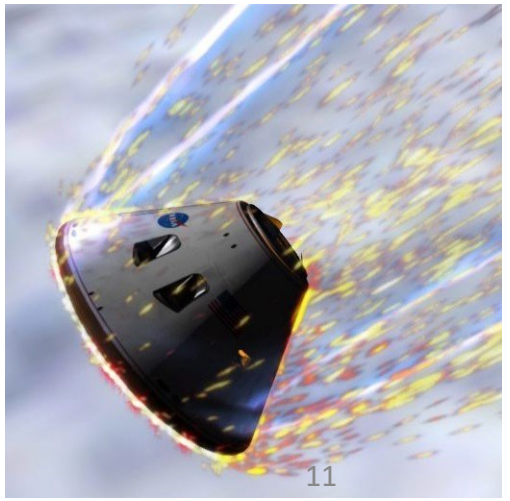
Lunar Landing Simulations

- Multiple studies were conducted in 2007-2010 with Apollo Lunar Module and Space Shuttle pilots
  - Precision Lunar Landing
  - Proximity Operations and Docking
  - Atmospheric Entry

- Possible VMS Uses in the Human Landing System (HLS) Program
  - Handling qualities studies to support vehicle configuration development and evaluation
  - Engineering studies for modifications after HLS enters service
  - Crew training







Rotorcraft and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Research

- The VMS was critical to:
  - Developing a valid rotorcraft handling qualities database
  - Development and continued improvement of the Rotorcraft Handling Qualities Specification (ADS-33)
- Future AAM research will focus on:
  - Vehicle handling qualities
  - Vehicle ride qualities
  - Safe operation in the Urban theater
    - Traffic management systems
    - Environment including physical obstacles and ambient conditions
- Future Flight Central and ATM simulation support:
  - Vertiport operations
  - AAM integration into the National Airspace System
  - Safe operation in the National Airspace System





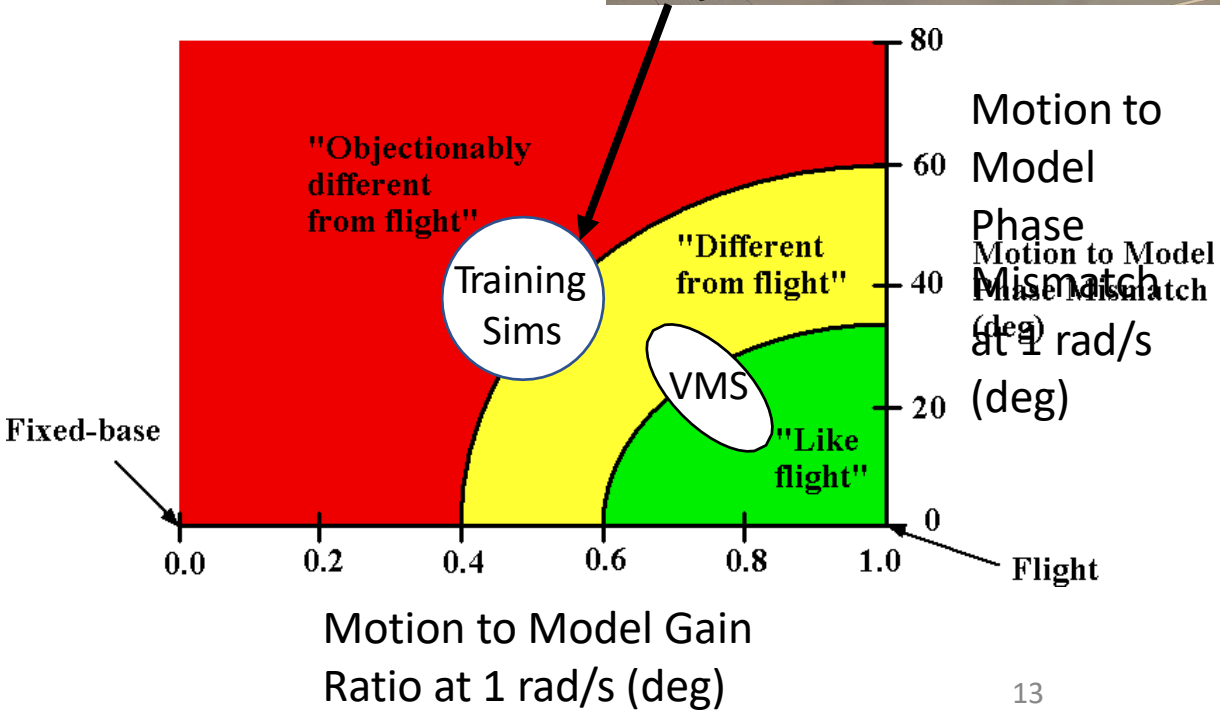


Simulation Fidelity and Cueing



The VMS has been instrumental in setting simulator fidelity and motion standards for pilot training

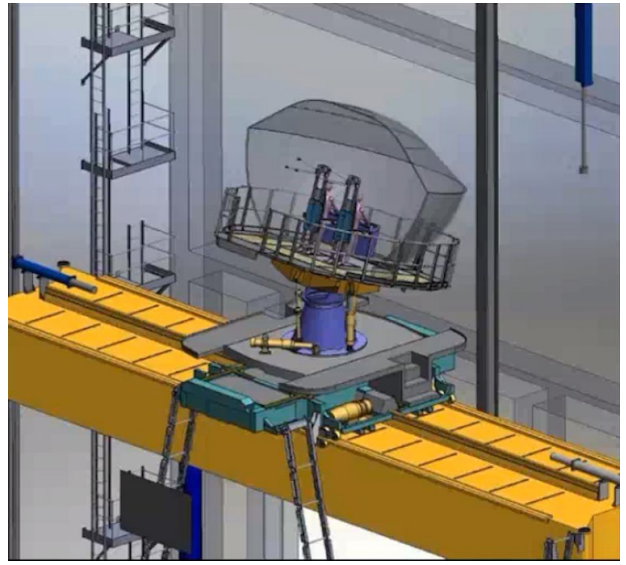
- Development and validation of Sinacori fidelity criteria
- Development of Objective Motion Cueing Test Criteria for the FAA
- Simulator motion algorithm development for stall recovery training

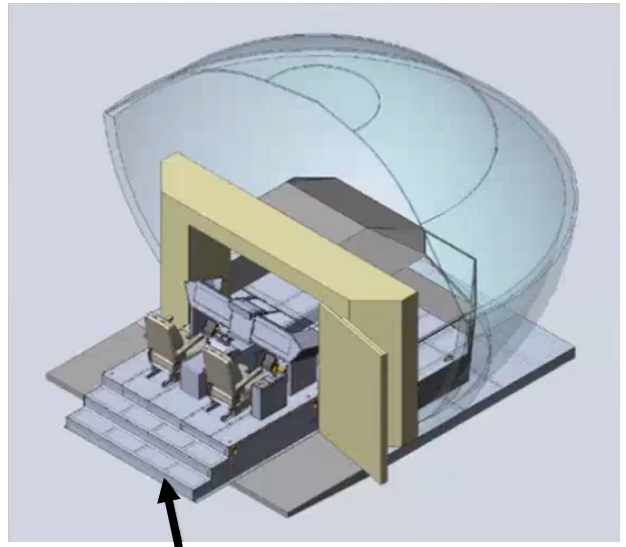


VMS Visual System Upgrade

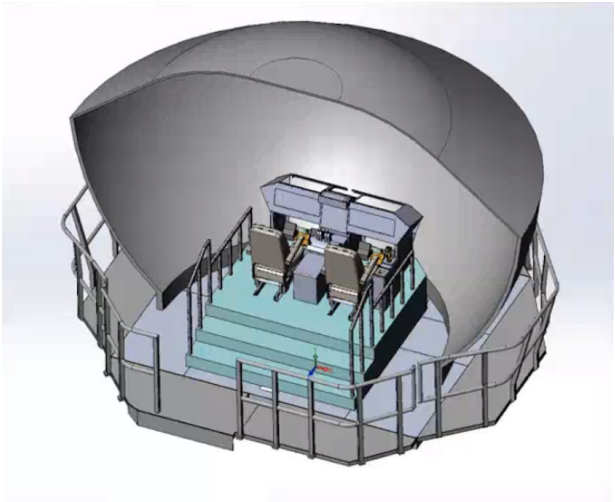
Replacement of the existing Wide-Angle-Collimated (WAC) display system with a wide projection display system

- 10-foot spherical dome (200x50 deg)
- Large aperture glass collimating mirror
- Three+ projectors
- Interchangeable flight deck
- One dome fixed to the motion base
- Two domes for fixed-base simulations





interchangeable flight deck



Current Activities at SimLabs

- SimLabs continually performs research and supports aerospace development
  - Small Boat Launch & Recovery Study
  - Revolutionary Vertical Lift Technology (RVLT) Electric Vertical Take-off and Landing (eVTOL) Handling Qualities (HQ)
  - FAA Electric Vertical Take-off and Landing (eVTOL)
  - Human Landing System (HLS)
  - National Campaign
  - Pathfinding for Airspace with Autonomous Vehicles (PAAV) Support
  - Federated Management Airspace Framework (Freddie) Support
  - Unsteady Pressure-Sensitive Paint Data Pipeline
  - Aerospace Supply Chain



Using AR/VR Headsets for Training

- NASA has been using VR to train astronauts for decades
  - Mostly stationary tasks or tasks with little visual motion
- Both inside and outside of NASA, there is a potential need for VR training of vehicle manual control skills
  - Current technical specs are a limiting factor (mainly resolution and FOV)
  - Cybersickness/motion sickness is an issue
  - VR needs to be benchmarked against reality and other means of training
- VR/AR has applications in both flight and maintenance training

VR Training in the International Space Station



Possible Future Use of VR/ARs in the VMS

- Applications:
  - VR as a tool for experiment design
  - VR to simulate large OTW views (e.g. in advanced air mobility vehicles)
  - AR/VR for rapidly reconfigurable cockpits

- Research:
  - Cybersickness

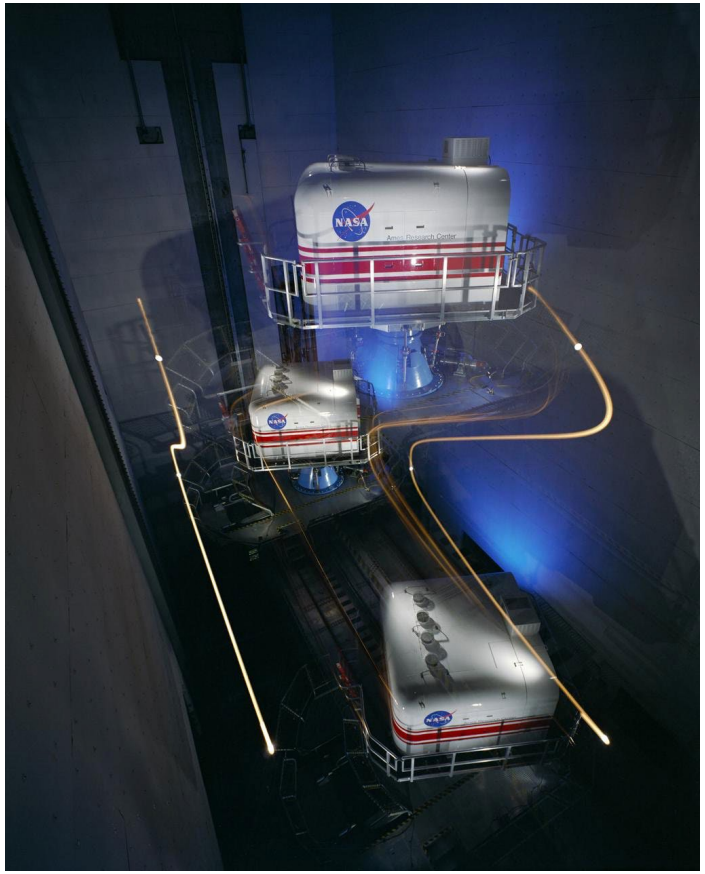
    (Terenzi and Zaal, 2020, Rotational and Translational Velocity and Acceleration Thresholds for the Onset of Cybersickness in Virtual Reality, AIAA-2020-0171)
  - Benchmarking VR for training

    (Terenzi and Zaal, 2020, Comparing Virtual Reality to Conventional Simulator Visuals: Effects of Peripheral Visual Cues in Roll-Axis Tracking Tasks, AIAA-2020-0170)



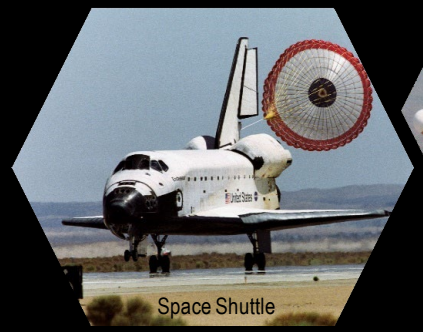
Summary

- SimLabs is an excellent facility for aerospace vehicle research and training
  - Realistic human cueing environments approximates flight
  - Cost-effective, timely, and safe compared with flight test
  - Variety of devices for various research and training activities
- VMS has made significant contributions to:
  - Aircraft and spacecraft handling qualities
  - Setting simulation fidelity standards
  - Risk reduction for aircraft and spacecraft programs
  - Prototyping and evaluating pilot-vehicle interface concepts
- SimLabs has a bright future:
  - Significant hardware and software upgrades for VMS
  - Helping NASA and commercial partners get into space
  - Exploring emerging technologies like UAM and VR/AR



Vertical Motion Simulator - 40 Years of Innovation


UH-60


Space Shuttle


NT-33


USAir 427


Crew Exp. Vehicle


Lunar Surf. Acc. Module

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020


X-Wing/RSRA


National Driving Sim


Piasecki VTCAD


RASCAL


JMR Demonstrator


AH-64


YAV-8B/VSRA

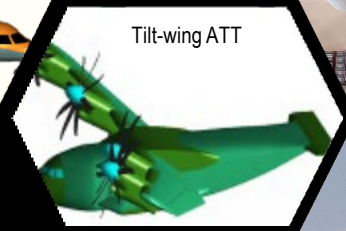

C-17


VDTR


LOC Simulator Research


XV-15


RAH-66


Tilt-wing ATT


ASTOVL Concept


High Speed Civil Transport


CH-47


LCTR


X-35B


X-32B



Airship

Questions?

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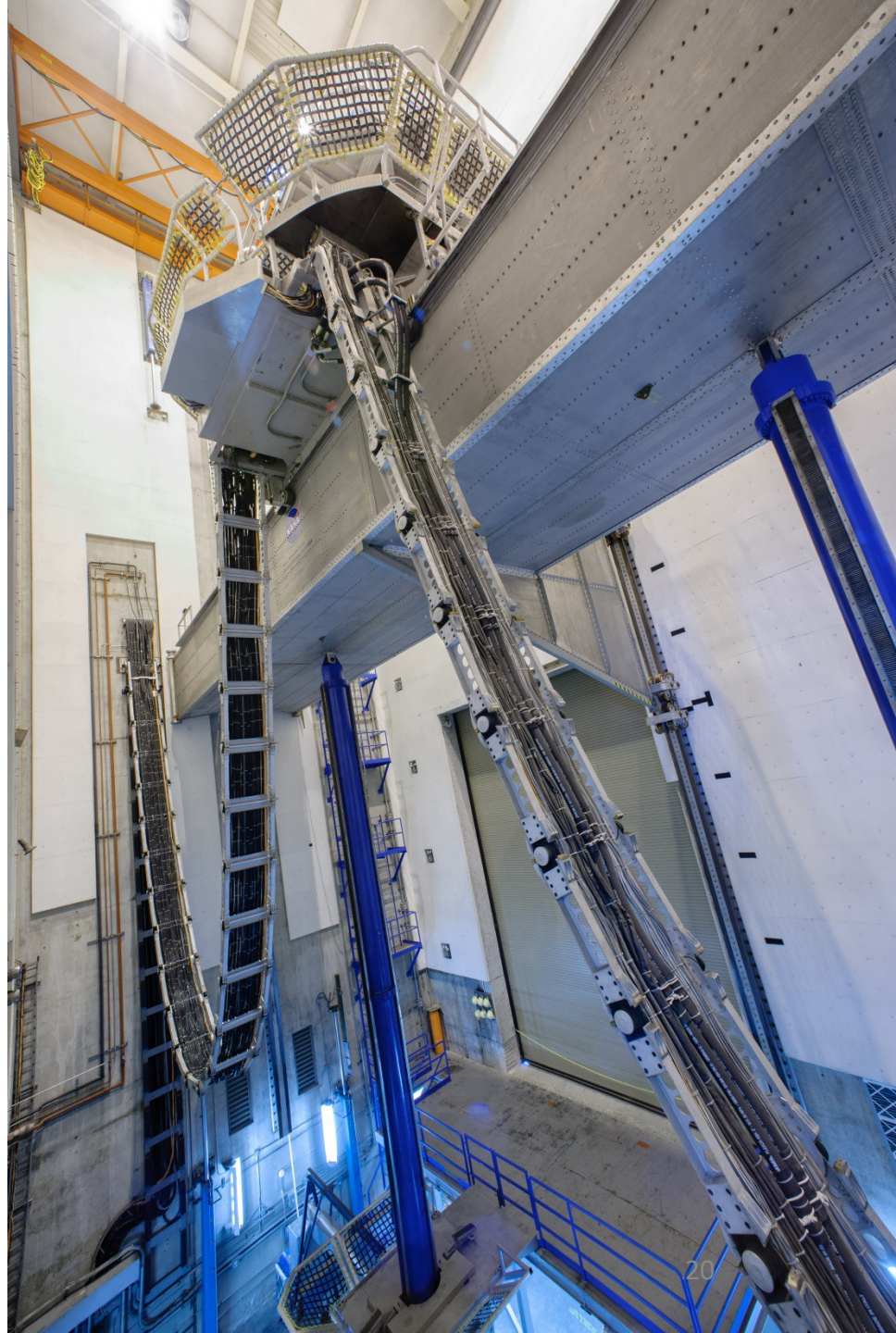

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