

# An Astronaut Lands at State

ROCKET MAN ENJOYS TEMPORARY  
DIPLOMATIC CAREER

BY PAUL KOSCAK



Lee Morin has been around the world in more ways than one. Growing up as a Foreign Service brat he spent years crisscrossing the globe. He attended a Japanese kindergarten, visited Africa and the Middle East and lived in Iraq.

As an adult, he also got to travel around the world—this time in about 90 minutes—as an astronaut aboard the space shuttle Atlantis in 2002, where he helped build the international space station.

Mr. Morin accrued 259 hours in space during that flight, during which he literally built parts of the station himself. While floating in space, he positioned beams and trusses, turned wrenches and sometimes perched at the end of a 70-foot robotic crane as the Earth slipped by 150 miles below. In fact he did so much construction work, the ironworkers union made him an honorary member.

Mr. Morin still travels around the world these days, but closer to the ground as the Department's deputy assistant secretary for science and technology. Flying a desk may seem like a major setback for someone used to zero gravity and fiery 17,000-mile-per-hour reentries, but for this space traveler, Navy captain and physician, it's a homecoming of sorts.

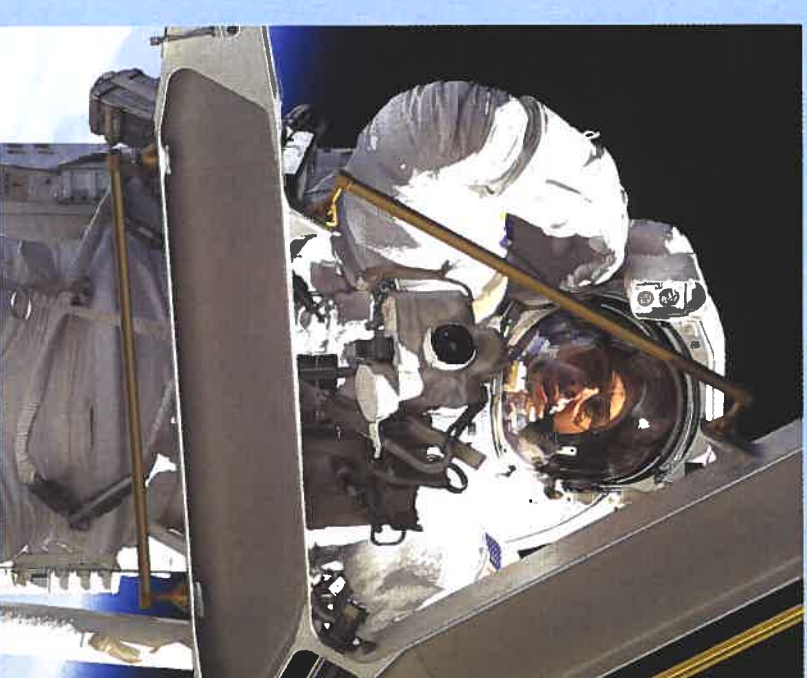
While growing up in Hyattsville, Md., he watched the Harry S Truman building being constructed. "This building always held great mystery for me."

So when the opportunity to take a temporary assignment at State presented itself, Mr. Morin couldn't resist. Being already assigned to NASA by the Navy, however, made the bureaucratic crossover difficult. It took four agencies—the Department of Defense, the

White House, NASA and State—to make it happen. "The detail is unique," said the 52-year-old grandfather, who became an astronaut at 43. Now he and his wife rent an apartment just a few blocks away where the "commute is great."

In his new job, Mr. Morin manages three offices—International Health Affairs, Science and Technical

Cooperation, and Space and Advanced Technology—getting involved in everything from eradicating disease to developing a new energy program.



*Space shuttle Atlantis makes a majestic return in 2002 after nearly 11 days in orbit. Above: An honorary hard hat, Lee Morin turned wrenches and moved beams to help build the international space station.*

He's involved in stemming a polio resurgence in Nigeria and other African nations and eradicating avian influenza in China, Vietnam and Thailand—where 70 percent of the cases are fatal—by solving the logistical hurdles of transporting medical supplies and specimens and pooling international resources.

"There's lots of diplomatic work," he said. "I bring different agencies together."