

REMARKS BY NASA ADMINISTRATOR CHARLES BOLDEN

Gala Dinner for the 'Race to the Moon: a Celebration with Space Legends'

USS Midway Museum, San Diego, Calif.

Sept. 5, 2009

Thank you for that great introduction and let me also thank the members of the honorary committee for all of their work in making this event happen.

It is an honor for this Marine pilot to be onboard this great fighting ship with a storied history that played such a crucial role in the Vietnam War and Operation Desert Storm. And it is an honor to be among so many astronauts that flew the great missions at the birth of the Space Age. Because of what you did in Mercury and Gemini, Apollo was possible. And Apollo was among the greatest achievements in exploration our country and the world has ever seen. Tonight's event brings down the curtain on the past several months of celebrations and commemorations of our historic lunar missions, and here we also mark all that came before.

Tonight, amid these warm memories of our past space journeys, I want to speak with you about exploration, and NASA, and the future of our nation's space agency.

Some believe that Apollo was the end of exploration. That Gene and Jack's footsteps at Taurus Littrow were the end of an era. I believe, however, that the age of grand exploration didn't end with Apollo at all. America has exploration in its DNA, and

NASA will continue that proud tradition long into the future. I believe, in fact, that the future of exploration is bright, and that great journeys are still to come.

Our future exploration journey will be shaped across many years and many missions. We will accomplish these new explorations in stepping stone fashion, as you did with Mercury, Gemini and Apollo. Through these missions, we will strengthen our nation's technological leadership and build strong international coalitions. The reasons for these new exploration missions are as old as the idea of America itself: discovery, science, innovation. These new voyages will inspire the next generation of young Americans just as your missions inspired many of my astronaut classmates to pursue careers in aviation, the military, and eventually at NASA.

My vision for NASA and for America in space takes what we have today and extends our reach. Our biggest, proudest asset, the International Space Station, is about to play an even more crucial role in developing the tools and technologies for us to go deeper into space. Once the station is completed next year, its research laboratories and capabilities will be, finally, "open for business." Our astronauts and those of our international partners will work to unlock the secrets of the space environment and the effects of long-duration microgravity on future deep space explorers.

The space station can also serve in another important role: as a catalyst and destination for a new era of commercial space. The entrepreneurial spirit of risk taking and innovation is alive and well today on the space frontier, and we can be proud that

America is leading the way. To help us extend our reach to the universe, NASA must and will use these commercial partnerships to connect the station with Earth and other destinations in low Earth orbit. For us to take full advantage of these new space pioneers, NASA must pursue innovations to lower the cost of space exploration. In this time of limited budget resources, such new partnerships will free us to do what NASA does so well: explore the unknown.

This grand new age of exploration will require innovative and robust new technology development. In the years ahead, NASA will renew its commitment to the research and innovative technologies that will enable sustainable human exploration beyond LEO. And while we do this, we will also make full use of these technologies to enhance our lives on Earth. These technology investments should coordinate and leverage investments made by others, such as our international partners, academia and industry. Our challenge will be to align these common interests with our exploration goals, and in the process, yield a more agile and flexible NASA approach to our partners. Along the way, these new relationships will transform NASA itself, strengthening our ability to serve the nation and use our unique research centers, laboratories and test facilities to maximum benefit.

Beyond low Earth orbit, our exploring can take different forms and will eventually include many destinations--with missions that may answer many long-held questions about ourselves and our role in the universe. Spaceships that fly to the moon, or explore asteroids and comets can not only gain new scientific information about these ancient

elements, but give us the understanding that we will need to predict the paths of solar system visitors to protect Earth from possible collisions. One of NASA's key roles has been to monitor and protect the planet, and that role of planetary protection will be an important strand in our future as well.

By placing telescopes at the Lagrange Points in deep space we may be able to image Earth-like planets, while we can use the lunar surface for a new era of robotic exploration and as a test-bed for exploration technologies. In fact, future human exploration will require a close partnership with enabling robotic missions. Just as Ranger, Surveyor, and Lunar Orbiter paved the way for your Apollo missions, so too will new robotic precursor missions gather the data and characterize the space environment to make our human voyages safer.

These robotic missions will of course also be flown closer to home, helping scientists better understand Earth's weather, climate changes, rainfall patterns and the nature of the oceans.

Building on our new commercial and international partnerships, agile technology development and a new generation of robotic and crewed spacecraft, our deepest exploration destinations await. Young Americans just beginning their studies today will be the space explorers of tomorrow. Flight after flight, every mission will build upon the results of the previous one, strengthening our nation's economy, answering age old

questions, and improving our world. That's what our exploration instinct can achieve in NASA's second half century.

No one can predict exactly how all of these voyages will unfold. But here's what I do know: today's NASA is working every day to make life better for every American family, and to make new scientific discoveries that tell us about the workings of the universe as well as our weather. NASA's people get up and come to work each day with the same ethos that drove the Apollo era; how can we make the unknown known? It is the same spirit that I knew in my days as a NASA employee in the Astronaut Corps and it is why it is an honor and a privilege to serve as NASA Administrator today.

With exploration and innovation as our traditions, with excellence as our work product, I invite all of you to be a part of the next half century of American space leadership, in an agency whose story is still being written and whose best days and boldest achievements are yet to come.

It is my honor to be here tonight among so many of the great heroes of our history. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you this evening, and may God Bless America!