



REMARKS

# Remarks by Vice President Pence at the Fifth Meeting of the National Space Council | Huntsville, AL

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THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you all. To Governor Ivey, Secretary Ross, Secretary Chao, Secretary Wilson; to NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine; to all the members of the National Space Council and the Users' Advisory Group; to Dr. Deborah Barnhart and the great team here at the Space and Rocket Center; honored guests; and especially to all the dedicated the men and women of the Marshall Space Flight Center: It is great to be back in Rocket City. (Applause.)

Thank you for joining us for this fifth meeting of the National Space Council at an enormously important time in American leadership in space.

And while you're at it, join me in thanking our host today, the men and women of the United States Space and Rocket Center, who keep the great tradition — past, present, and future — of American space leadership alive every day. (Applause.)

And speaking of space enthusiasts, allow me to bring greetings from a friend of mine and a man who is committed to securing American leadership here on Earth and in the boundless expanse of space. I bring greetings from the 45th President of the United States of America, President Donald Trump. (Applause.)

You know, the United States has always been a nation of restless pioneers, ever striving to explore uncharted territories, reach new horizons, and venture into the unknown to expand the boundaries of human knowledge.

And as President Trump has said, in his words, "It is America's destiny to be...the leader amongst nations on our [own] adventure into the great unknown." And over the

past two years, we've begun writing the next great chapter of that adventure with American ingenuity and American industry.

And, you know, it's especially fitting to gather here, in Rocket City, as we prepare to celebrate later this year the golden anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission, which carried the first men to the Moon and was powered by rockets developed right here in Huntsville, Alabama. (Applause.)

And as we approach that anniversary, I can tell you it's a special honor and a privilege for us to be joined in this effort by one of those two courageous astronauts whose lunar module set down on the Sea of Tranquility. Ladies and gentlemen, would you mind getting on your feet and helping me to welcome and thank Apollo 11 astronaut, Buzz Aldrin, for a lifetime of service and heroism. (Applause.)

Fifty years ago, "one small step for man" became "one giant leap for mankind." But now it's come the time for us to make the next "giant leap" and return American astronauts to the Moon, establish a permanent base there, and develop the technologies to take American astronauts to Mars and beyond. (Applause.) That's the next "giant leap." (Applause.)

And as we'll hear today from these members of the National Space Council and our distinguished panelists, under the leadership of President Trump and with the strong support of NASA's 13th Administrator, we've made great progress toward renewing America's proud legacy of leadership in space.

We have been updating out-of-date regulations to unleash America's pioneering space companies and forge the technologies to blaze new trails into space and create American jobs for the future. We've been implementing the first-ever policy of space traffic management to enable commercial enterprise and protect our nation's asset in a [congested] orbital environment.

And to meet the growing security threats in the war-fighting domain of space, at the direction of our Commander-in-Chief, this year, working with the Congress, we will establish the sixth branch of our armed forces: The United States Space Force. (Applause.)

In fact, I'm proud to share with all of you that the President has announced his nominee to lead the new unified combatant command, the United States Space Command, today. Four-star Air Force General John Raymond will lead U.S. Space Command. (Applause.)

And while we're mentioning people that we admire, I know she'll soon be returning to the academic world, but let me take this moment to thank Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson for her tireless work and the historic role she has played in helping the Air Force launch the United State Space Force. Thank you, Heather, for your service to the nation. (Applause.)

Today we stand at the dawn of a new era of space exploration — an era that will bring untold new challenges and opportunities, and it will demand the best of us. It will demand new ideas, renewed energies, courage, and bold action.

After spending more than 45 years in low-Earth orbit, President Trump and our entire administration believe that it is time to push onward to new horizons and new destinations.

And that's why, under the President's leadership, we've taken decisive action to propel human space exploration missions further into the depths of our solar system, and we've unleashed America's private pioneers to cultivate the vast expanses of low-Earth orbit.

Last year, NASA and American innovators began designing the precursor to outposts on the Moon and the mission to Mars, the Lunar Gateway. And we are rallying the world to join us in this vital work. This month, Canada became our first international partner and announced a 24-year commitment to cooperate on the Lunar Gateway. (Applause.)

And, as we speak, we're working with Congress to provide \$500 million to get an American crew aboard this lunar-orbiting platform in the coming years.

We've also made great progress on the Commercial Crew Program. This month, the Crew Dragon's successful mission was the first time since the last space shuttle flight in 2011 that we launched an American rocket from American soil, designed to send humans to space orbit.

And as President Trump said not long ago, before the year is out, "American astronauts will go back to space on American rockets." (Applause.)

You know, I had the chance to talk to one of the Americans who was aboard the International Space Station when the Crew Dragon docked there. She's an American patriot, a combat veteran, a United States Army aviator who recently traded her Army uniform for an American spacesuit, Anne McClain.

And today, we're honored to be joined by two other pioneers of space flight who helped blaze the trail for Anne and for every young American who dreams of one day leading her nation in space. So join me in thanking these American heroes for their service and leadership: Colleen — Colonel Eileen Collins and Dr. Sandy Magnus. These are two great American heroes. (Applause.)

So, we've made great strides in advancing the President's bold new vision for space — a vision to push our nation farther and faster than ever. And unlike the last few administrations, we've had the budgets to match it.

In fact, with the strong support of leaders in Congress, like the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Alabama's own Senator Richard Shelby — (applause) — the President has already signed into law the largest NASA budget since the days of the Apollo program. And we've fully funded the Space Launch System and the Orion space capsule. (Applause.)

And, of course, in December of 2017, the President signed Space Policy Directive-1 to return Americans to the moon and prioritize crewed missions to the lunar surface.

SPD-1, as it's come to be known, marked a watershed moment for America's space enterprise. Since the disastrous decision to cancel the Constellation Program in 2010, the truth is NASA's exploration efforts were left adrift with no clear direction, focus, or mission.

To your great credit, the men and women of the Marshall Space Flight Center never gave up. You persevered with distinction through a time of indecision at the highest levels of our national government. And you continued to do your best, which is to build the greatest and most powerful rockets ever known to man. Give yourselves a round of applause for persevering here at Marshall — (applause) — and developing the rockets of the future.

With Space Policy Directive-1, President Trump finally gave NASA the clear direction and clear mission that it needs. And as President Trump said, we will return "American astronauts to the Moon for the first time since 1972 for long-term exploration and use." And as he said, not only to, quote, "plant our flag and leave our footprint[s]," but to "establish a foundation [on the Moon] for an eventual mission to Mars." (Applause.)

Now, over the past two years, I've had the privilege to travel across this country and meet with many of NASA's more than 18,000 scientists, engineers, astronauts, and contract officers. Everywhere I go, I see renewed energy and excitement that the President's commitment to American leadership in space has inspired.

But to achieve our objectives, I came here today to say that NASA must meet that new spirit with new urgency and the focus that it all deserves.

Just a few moments ago, Buzz Aldrin was reflecting on his time in the Apollo program. He talked about that fabled Apollo 11 mission. He said, in 1962, we had an objective; we had time, but we didn't have a plan.

In Space Policy Directive-1, the President directed NASA to create a lunar exploration plan. But as of today, more than 15 months later, we still don't have a plan in place. But Administrator Bridenstine told me, five minutes ago, we now have a plan to return to the moon. (Applause.)

The truth is, despite the dedication of the men and women who are designing and building and testing the SLS, you all know the program has been plagued by

bureaucratic inertia, by what some call the “paralysis of analysis.” The nation actually learned, with great disappointment, in recent weeks, that the date for its first flight for the SLS has been pushed back yet again, to 2021.

You know, after years of cost overruns and slipped deadlines, we’re actually being told that the earliest we can get back to the moon is 2028. Now, that would be 18 years after the SLS program was started and 11 years after the President of the United States directed NASA to return American astronauts to the Moon.

Ladies and gentlemen, that’s just not good enough. We’re better than that. It took us eight years to get to the Moon the first time, 50 years ago, when we had never done it before, and it shouldn’t take us 11 years to get back.

You know, it’s been 47 years since American astronauts last walked on the Moon. And ironically, America’s first generation of space pioneers knew that it would likely take time for the next generation to return to the Moon, including one of the founders of Rocket City, Dr. Wernher von Braun.

Just as it took the development of the airplane for the United States Navy to reach the South Pole, 45 years after an expedition of Norwegian explorers made history and got there in 1911, Dr. von Braun believed it would take what he called, in his words, “enabling technology” for us to return to the lunar surface, and that it might take just as much time to develop it.

The good news is, as we will hear from our distinguished panelists today, those enabling technologies have arrived and we are going back to the Moon. (Applause.)

Because of your work, because of the ingenuity, dedication, and entrepreneurial spirit reflected in this room and throughout the American space enterprise, since the end of Apollo 11, we have forged incredible breakthroughs in our technology that have allowed us to go further, more safely, in space than ever before.

We have the technology to return to the Moon and renew American leadership in human space exploration. What we need now is urgency.

Now, make no mistake about it: We’re in a space race today, just as we were in the 1960s, and the stakes are even higher.

Last December, China became the first nation to land on the far side of the Moon and revealed their ambition to seize the lunar strategic high ground and become the world’s preeminent spacefaring nation.

And for more than seven years, without a viable human space launch program of our own, Russia has been charging the United States more than \$80 million a seat every time an American astronaut travels to the International Space Station.

But it's not just competition against our adversaries; we're also racing against our worst enemy: complacency. And the truth is, we've been here before.

Nearly 62 years ago, the race for space began, and the Soviet Union took an early lead. But the sight of Sputnik blinking across the October sky spurred the American people to action. We refused to accept a future in space written by the enemies of freedom. We vowed to claim our rightful place as the undisputed leader in the exploration of the heavens. And 12 years later, the "one giant leap" occurred. We achieved our goal of American leadership in space.

Now, more than 50 years later, we gather here today to say that it's up to this generation to meet the challenge of our time. And with the recommendations of this National Space Council, the recommendations that will be approved today, I believe that we are rising to meet that challenge head on. (Applause.)

Just as the United States was the first nation to reach the Moon in the 20th Century, so too will be — we'd be the first nation to return astronauts to the Moon in the 21st century.

And I'm here, on the President's behalf, to tell the men and women of the Marshall Space Flight Center and the American people that, at the direction of the President of the United States, it is the stated policy of this administration and the United States of America to return American astronauts to the Moon within the next five years. (Applause.)

And let me be clear: The first woman and the next man on the Moon will both be American astronauts, launched by American rockets, from American soil. (Applause.)

But to accomplish this, we must redouble our efforts here in Huntsville and throughout this program. We must accelerate the SLS program to meet this objective. But know this: The President has directed NASA and Administrator Jim Bridenstine to accomplish this goal by any means necessary.

In order to succeed, as the Administrator will discuss today, we must focus on the mission over the means. You must consider every available option and platform to meet our goals, including industry, government, and the entire American space enterprise.

Our administration is committed to this goal. And this President, this administration, and the American people are committed to achieving that goal at the Marshall Space Flight Center. (Applause.)

But the truth is, we're committed to Marshall, the incredible history that you have here. But to be clear, we're not committed to any one contractor. If our current contractors can't meet this objective, then we'll find ones that will. If American industry can provide critical commercial services without government development, then we'll

buy them. And if commercial rockets are the only way to get American astronauts to the Moon in the next five years, then commercial rockets it will be.

Urgency must be our watchword. Failure to achieve our goal to return an American astronaut to the Moon in the next five years is not an option.

As we will discuss today, this will require renewed focus and a relentless will to achieve our mission. And that's exactly what you have in abundance here in northern Alabama.

You know, urgency has always been in the DNA of Rocket City. And the men and women of the Marshall Space Flight Center know exactly what it takes to be first — to be first in space because you've been doing it for generations.

It was here where you built the Jupiter-C rocket that carried into orbit America's first satellite, Explorer 1.

It was here you spent 15 grueling months executing over 200 tests of the Redstone rocket that launched America's first astronaut into space — Alan Shepard — on the Mercury 7, the "Freedom 7" Mercury capsule.

And it was here you answered the call of the nation and stunned the world. In less than eight years, you built a rocket that carried the first men to the Moon, the mighty Saturn 5 that we see before us today.

The hardworking men and women of Rocket City have always embodied the American pioneering spirit: restless energy, urgency, national pride, and impatience with anything less than the best.

And we know that it will be here, in Rocket City, where America will build a new generation of rockets that will carry American astronauts back to the Moon, on to Mars, and to worlds beyond.

For more than 60 years, Huntsville, Alabama, has built the finest rocket propulsion systems in the world. And we want to ensure it remains that way for the next 60 years.

As we continue to push farther into our solar system, we'll need innovative new propulsion systems to get us there, including nuclear power. (Applause.) And the President and I know there's no place on Earth better equipped to lead the world in pioneering these new propulsion technologies than Rocket City, U.S.A.

Now, the conventional wisdom says that we'll need more time to do what President Trump has challenged us to do: landing American astronauts on the Moon within the next five years. Some will say it's too hard, it's too risky, it's too expensive. But the same was said back in 1962 when President Kennedy boldly declared that we, in his words, "choose to go to the Moon in this decade."

Our space program was still in its infancy then. NASA was barely two years old. And yet, President Kennedy knew that history is not written by those who stubbornly cling to the status quo. History is written by those who dare to dream big and do the impossible. (Applause.)

Then, as now, the United States didn't have a rocket capable of sending a spacecraft to the surface of the Moon. But now, as then, the United States has a President who is a dreamer; who understands that this is a challenge that, once again, "we are unwilling to postpone" and "one which we intend to win" again.

President Trump knows that meeting this challenge will require a great national investment of time, talent, and resources. But the costs of inaction are greater.

The United States must remain first in space, in this century as in the last, not just to propel our economy and secure our nation, but above all because the rules and values of space, like every great frontier, will be written by those who have the courage to get there first and the commitment to stay.

And as Americans, and as heirs of this great nation dedicated to life, to liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, it's nothing less than our duty to ensure that our most cherished values are the foundation of mankind's future in space. (Applause.)

President Trump is committed to building a space program worthy of our great nation. And we're going to continue to work with leaders in Congress and Senator Shelby and others to provide the Marshall Space Flight Center and all of NASA the resources they need to meet to the goal that we articulated today.

But, as I said, mission success will require more than just money. And that's why, today, the National Space Council will send recommendations to the President that will launch a major course correction for NASA and reignite that spark of urgency that propelled America to the vanguard of space exploration 50 years ago.

As you will hear, in these recommendations, we will call on NASA not just to adopt new policies but to embrace a new mindset. That begins with setting bold goals and staying on schedule. To reach the Moon in the next five years, we must select our destinations now. NASA already knows that the lunar South Pole holds great scientific, economic, and strategic value. But now it's time to commit to go there.

And today, the National Space Council will recommend that when the first American astronauts return to the lunar surface, that they will take their first steps on the Moon's South Pole. (Applause.)

But in order to accomplish this, NASA must transform itself into a leaner, more accountable, and more agile organization. If NASA is not currently capable of landing American astronauts on the Moon in five years, we need to change the organization, not the mission.



To continue to build a world-class workforce, NASA needs the authority to recruit, train, and motivate the world's best and brightest scientists, engineers, and managers, and to remove any barriers standing in their way. And that includes building new and renewed partnerships with America's pioneering space companies and entrepreneurs.

And in this century, we're going back to the Moon with new ambitions, not just to travel there, not just to develop technologies there, but also to mine oxygen from lunar rocks that will refuel our ships; to use nuclear power to extract water from the permanently shadowed craters of the South Pole; and to fly on a new generation of spacecraft that will enable us to reach Mars not in years but in months.

To develop these new technologies, NASA must adopt an all-hands-on-deck approach to procurement, contracts, and its partnerships. If a commercial company can deliver a rocket, a lunar lander, or any other capability faster and at a lower cost to the taxpayer than the status quo, then NASA needs to have the authority and the courage to change course quickly and decisively to achieve that goal. (Applause.)

As we proved during Apollo program, we don't need to sacrifice quality or safety to achieve speed and efficiency. We're not asking anyone to take unnecessary risks. Rather, we're challenging everyone involved in America's space enterprise to think bigger, fail smarter, and work harder than ever before.

The task before us will involve sacrifice and determination, hardship and hazard. But as we embark on this journey, we would do well to remember the words spoken by the late Gene Cernan, the last man to walk on the Moon. Before he boarded the lunar module 45 years ago, Gene said, and I quote, "America's challenge of today has forged man's destiny of tomorrow."

As Gene Cernan knew then, the exploration of the heavens in this still-new century will go forward with or without the United States. But Americans don't do second place. Americans lead. (Applause.) And so we will.

So as we convene this fifth meeting of the still newly reconstituted National Space Council, the President and I are challenging all of you here in Rocket City, and all those involved in the space enterprise that are looking on across the nation, to step up and get ready to do your part to help lead our nation into the vast expanse of space again.

And as we renew our commitment to lead in space, let's go with confidence and let's go with faith. Faith in the vision and the goal that's articulated today: that we can achieve it; that Americans can achieve anything that we put our minds to. Faith in the extraordinary ingenuity and capability of the men and women of NASA and America's space enterprise, and their ability to meet those challenges if given the resources and the support to do it. And especially faith in the courage of the men and women who are now, and those who will join, the storied ranks of American astronauts — that next generation of restless pioneers that will carry American leadership into space. It's

extraordinary to think of the heroes that will be forged in our renewed commitment to space.

And lastly, let's have that other kind of faith as well. Let's have that faith as America renews our commitment to leadership in space, as we call on our best and brightest minds to achieve those goals and we call on our most courageous to suit up and go — that those that we send, let's have faith that they will not go alone. For as millions of Americans have cherished throughout our long and storied history of exploration by this nation, let's believe, as the Old Book says, that there's nowhere we can go from His spirit. If we rise on the wings of the dawn, if we settle on the far side of the sea, even if we "go up to the heavens," there, His hand will guide us and His right hand will hold us fast. (Applause.)

So thank you for the opportunity to be with you today. Thanks again to all the members of the National Space Council and all the extraordinary Americans gathered here today.

I leave here with confidence that with the leadership of President Donald Trump, with our renewed commitment to space, with the courage and ingenuity of this new generation of explorers, and with God's help, that America will once again astonish the world with the heights we reach and the wonder we achieve. And we will lead the world in human space exploration once again.

Now let's get to work. Thank you all. (Applause.) God bless you.

END

2:41 P.M. CDT