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Remarks at the National Press Club Event Featuring NASA Administrator Charles Bolden

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It is my distinct privilege to introduce to you this morning a man who has excelled as a Marine pilot and a leader of his peers in that demanding and dangerous profession; as an astronaut; as a manager of high-tech agencies and enterprises; as an advisor to businesses, universities, and philanthropies; and now as the visionary leader of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which he is restructuring into the science-centered, technology-advancing, forward-leaning institution it needs to be to meet the challenges and the opportunities of our country's activities in space in the 21st century.

But before I tell you a little more about Major General (retired) Charles F. Bolden, Jr., I want to say a few words about those challenges and opportunities in space.

I start by noting that President Obama realizes, I realize, and General Bolden realizes that our activities in space represent not just a grand and inspiring adventure of exploration and discovery of the universe we inhabit, but also an indispensable platform for observing what is happening in the environment of the Earth below, from transformations of land and vegetation, to melting ice and rising sea level, to the tracks of hurricanes and typhoons; a vantage point as well for monitoring potential threats to our national security; an indispensable element of our communications infrastructure and geopositioning capability; and a source of new products, services, businesses, and jobs whose potential is barely beginning to be tapped.

U.S. strength in space science and space technology stands as one of the pillars – alongside the vitality of our research universities and national laboratories, the strengths of our education system from pre-school to grad school, and our information, energy, and transportation infrastructures – the pillars that support this country's leadership across the range of science and engineering capabilities we need for economic competitiveness, growth, and job creation; for clean energy and environmental sustainability; for long and healthy lives for all of our citizens; and for national and homeland security.

U.S. leadership in human spaceflight, compellingly asserted in the landing of humans on the moon in 1969 and in five more such landings through 1972, and convincingly continued through the Space Shuttle program and the central U.S. role in the International Space Station, has brought forth the bravest among us to venture into this ultimate frontier, has engaged some of the cleverest among us to develop the technologies by which they could do so, and has inspired countless of our young people to study science and engineering so they too could reach for the stars.

President Obama understands all this with crystal clarity. He said so clearly and repeatedly in his campaign, and he has done so repeatedly since. The decisions that were unveiled yesterday about the direction of the U.S. human spaceflight program and NASA's other important programs of innovation, exploration, observation, and discovery going forward were made with the greatest appreciation for the importance of getting this right.

And they were made after a process of extensive consultation with experts inside and outside the Administration, the commissioning of new analyses of the pros and cons of alternative strategies and the study of these new analyses and previous ones alike, and the most careful reflection on the inevitable trade-offs, not excluding job losses and job gains in all the affected states.

I want to take a moment here to thank publicly Norm Augustine, one of our country's most distinguished aerospace engineers, and the other nine members of the independent, nonpartisan Augustine "Committee to Review U.S. Human Spaceflight Plans", which was formed to advise me, the NASA Administrator, and the President on the pros and cons of the program of record and alternatives to it. The Augustine Committee was an all-star group that included three other aerospace-industry leaders in addition to Norm, two former astronauts, a retired four-star Air Force general who chaired the National Research Council's recent study of the rationale and goals of the U.S. civil spaceflight program, the former chair of MIT's department of aeronautics and astronautics, the chair of the National Research Council's Space Studies Board, and the Princeton University space scientist who serves on President Obama's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology. This group, supported by analysts at NASA and the Aerospace Corporation, worked tirelessly from June through October, holding 14 meetings and 3 site visits in that period and receiving extensive input from members of Congress, former astronauts and NASA officials, professional societies, and the public. Their 150-page report was immensely valuable to me, to Administrator Bolden, and to the President in clarifying the choices before us, and many of its key findings are reflected in the new approach announced with the President's FY2011 budget yesterday.

But that approach is what Administrator Bolden is here to talk about this morning, and I am not going to steal his thunder. Let me say only that I am convinced, and President Obama is convinced, that the new approach on which Administrator Bolden will be elaborating in a moment is the right approach for this time, these challenges, these opportunities. It is not a retreat from U.S. leadership in human spaceflight as some are asserting, but an exciting and promising path forward that invests in new ideas, new technologies, and the complementary strengths of NASA and the private sector in order to make human access both to low Earth orbit, and beyond to deep space, faster, safer, and more affordable than it could ever have been on the old path.

Before I turn it over to General Bolden to say more about that, just a few more words about him.

Born and raised in Columbia, South Carolina, Charlie graduated from Annapolis with a degree in electrical science in 1968 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Marines. He became a naval aviator, flying more than 100 combat sorties in the A6A Intruder over North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, earning a Distinguished Flying Cross, an Air Medal, and a Defense Meritorious Service Medal (among others). Before being selected by NASA as an astronaut at the beginning of the 1980s, he worked-in a stint as a naval test pilot and earned a masters degree in systems management from USC.

As an astronaut he flew four Space Shuttle missions between 1986 and 1994, two as pilot and two as commander. These included the 1990 Space Shuttle *Discovery* mission that deployed the Hubble Space Telescope; the 1992 flight of Space Shuttle *Atlantis* that was the first devoted to NASA's "Mission to Planet Earth"; and the historic 1994 Space Shuttle *Discovery* mission – the first with the participation of a Russian cosmonaut as a mission-specialist crew member.

In other roles in NASA besides spaceflight itself, Charlie served as Astronaut Chief Safety Officer, Lead Astronaut for Vehicle Test and Checkout at the Kennedy Space Center, Chief of the Safety Division at the Johnson Space Center, Special Assistant to the Director of the Johnson Center, and Assistant Deputy Administrator at NASA Headquarters.

In June 1994 he left NASA and returned to active duty in the Marine Corps, initially serving as Deputy Commandant of Midshipmen at the Naval Academy. Subsequently he served as Deputy Commanding General of Marine Forces in the Pacific, Commanding General in charge of the Marine forces in support of Operation Desert Thunder in Kuwait, Deputy Commander of U.S. Forces in Japan, and Commanding General of the Third Marine Aircraft Wing. He retired in August 2004 with the rank of Major General.

Thereafter he served in a couple of management positions in the private sector and on a number of corporate, academic, and philanthropic boards, before being nominated as Administrator of NASA by President Obama and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. He began his duties at the NASA helm last July 17.

What a career! And there is more to come. This is an individual who has demonstrated again and again that he well and truly has "the right stuff". And I have no doubt whatever that what he is bringing to NASA is "change we can believe in". I give you the NASA Administrator, General Charles F. Bolden, Jr.