

U.S. Astronauts Ask: Where Is the Vision?

February 15, 2010

Dear Mr. & Mrs. America:

There has never been, and likely never will be, another government program that expedites technological innovation so much as the U.S. space program. There is not another program that has so successfully rallied a nation, inspired youngsters toward academic achievement or established the U.S. as the world leader in technology.

The manned space program has, in particular, been a source of our nation's strength and character. But an Achilles heel in the form of our country's executive branch threatens a mortal wound. Under the Obama 2011 budget, the U.S. will no longer ferry humans into space—no moon, no Mars. The source of much of America's inspiration and spirit, the impetus for so much discovery, technology and imagination, is in jeopardy. The demise of America's space program is just another step in the dismantling of our nation.

Where's the vision put so eloquently in 1962 when President Kennedy said, "serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills." President Kennedy delivered a vision to the American public that demanded courage, imagination and follow-through. The long-term focus has always been to progressively conquer new frontiers. Certainly, that focus has been shared by both government and private enterprise but to withdraw government from manned space flight will surely obliterate those far-reaching frontiers and precipitously lower our nation's pre-

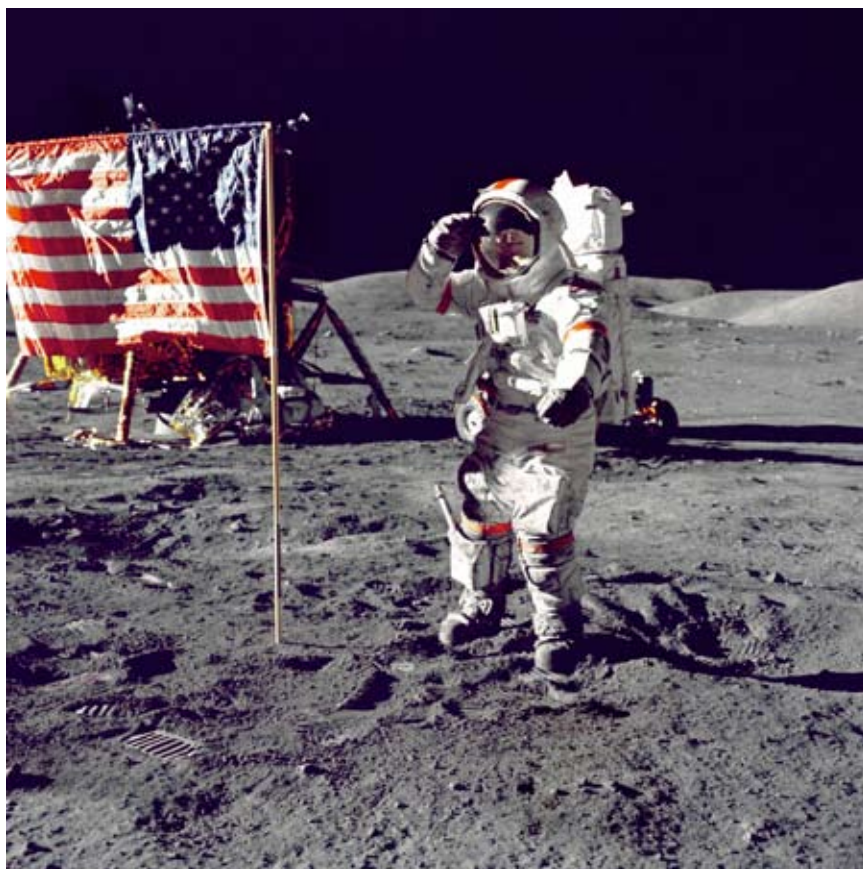
eminence in technology.

We are the only country to ever conquer the high ground, the moon. And now we are to give that up to the Russians and Chinese who are committed to having a permanent presence there? The national security implications are starkly real. From the high ground, foreign governments will have greater access to monitor U.S. technology assets in Earth orbit. Whoever controls the high ground becomes the world's leader in technology.

We ask you to join those members of Congress who have the fortitude and courage to embrace the vision that has become part of our nation's signature and who are advocates of returning to the moon and maintaining America's leadership role in the exploration of space.

Respectfully,

Mercury, Gemini and Apollo Astronauts:
Scott Carpenter, Gene Cernan, Charlie Duke; and
The Real Space Cowboys Creator Ed Buckbee



NASA Great Images

Gene Cernan, who participated in the Gemini and Apollo missions, is one of three astronauts who have written an open letter to the American people, calling on them to rescue the manned space program. As commander of Apollo 17, in December 1972, he became "the last man on the Moon," as shown here.