

Now Is the Time To Be Bold, Innovative, Wise

Here are excerpts of the written testimony of Eugene A. Cernan, Commander of Apollo 17, before the Senate Committee of Commerce, Science and Transportation, on May 12.

... We have recently heard a lot of eloquent verbiage about the *exploration* of space—landing on an asteroid, circling Mars, and, at some time in the future perhaps, landing on the Red Planet. There is talk about a decision yet to come of building a large booster which might ultimately take us anywhere we want to go into the far reaches of the universe. There are, however, no details, no specific challenge, and no commitment as to where or specifically when this *exploration* might come to pass. ‘Hope is not a destination, nor is it a management tool...’

However, when one examines the FY2011 budget proposal, nowhere is there to be found one penny allocated to support space exploration. ... [N]owhere do we find any mention of the Human Exploration of Space and nowhere do we find a commitment in dollars to support this national endeavor. ...

In this proposed budget we find several billions of dollars allotted to developing commercial human access to low Earth orbit, based upon the assumptions and claims by those competing for this exclusive contract who say that they can achieve this goal in little more than three years, and that it can be done for something less than 5 billion dollars. (These are the same entrepreneurs who are over a year late delivering unmanned cargo to LEO [Low Earth Orbit]. ...)

I submit to this Committee and to the Congress that it will take the private sector as long as 10 years to access LEO safely and cost-effectively. ...

The President’s proposal suggests we develop ‘technology for the future.’ The technology we enjoy today, 40 years after Apollo, is technology that was developed from accepting a challenge and reaching for a goal. It was technology with a focus, with a mission. To simply put the best and the brightest in a room and tell them to develop breakthrough technology that could or might or

may be useful in the future is a naive proposition. Exploration drives *technology innovation—not the reverse*.

Also in the proposal is the *possibility* that *maybe*, at *some time*, *perhaps* as far down the road as 2015, the United States would decide to develop a heavy lift booster. ... Coincidentally, Constellation has a heavy lift booster, Ares V, not only on the drawing boards but in component test today. ...

Appropriately under the law, both Houses of the Congress of the United States with overwhelmingly bipartisan support, approved and agreed that Constellation should go forward. ...

It is unknown how much time and thought was put into the existing budget proposal for FY2011, or by whom this proposal was generated, but it is common knowledge that few if any of those government agencies referred to above [OMB, DOD, NASA] were asked to participate. ... This leads one to the conclusion that this proposal was most likely formulated in haste within the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and/or the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), with little or no input from the NASA Administrator, Center Directors, or senior NASA management. ...

With the submission of FY2011 budget, either the Administration and the originators of this budget proposal are showing extreme naivete or, I can only conclude, they are willing to take accountability for a calculated plan to *dismantle* America’s leadership in the world of Human Space Exploration. In either case, this proposal is a *travesty* which flows against the grain of over 200 years of our history and, today, against the will of the majority of Americans. The space program has never been an entitlement, it’s an investment in the future—an investment in technology, jobs, world respect and leadership, and perhaps most importantly in the inspiration and education of our youth. Those best and brightest minds at NASA and throughout the multitudes of private contractors, large and small, did not join the team to design windmills, but to live their dreams of once again taking us where no man has gone before.

If we abdicate our leadership in space today, not only is human spaceflight and space exploration at risk, but I believe the future of this country and thus the future of our children and grandchildren as well. Now is the time for wiser heads in the Congress of the United States to prevail. Now is the time to overrule this Administration’s *pledge to mediocrity*. Now is the time to be *bold*, *innovative* and *wise* in how we invest in the future of America. ...