



The Vision for Space Exploration

National Aeronautics Space Administration

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for Space
Exploration

February 2004

“This cause of exploration and discovery is not an option we choose; it is a desire written in the human heart.”

President George W. Bush
February 4, 2003

“We leave as we came, and God willing as we shall return, with peace and hope for all mankind.”

Eugene Cernan (Commander of last Apollo mission)
December 17, 1972

“... America will make those words come true.”

President George W. Bush
January 14, 2004

Message from the NASA Administrator

Dear Reader,

With last year's budget, NASA released a new Strategic Plan outlining a new approach to space exploration using a “building block” strategy to explore scientifically valuable destinations across our solar system. At the same time that we released the Strategic Plan, our Nation and the NASA family also suffered the loss of the seven brave astronauts aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia. The report of the Columbia Accident

Investigation Board emphasized the need for a clearer direction from which to drive NASA's human exploration agenda. On January 14, 2004, the President articulated a new vision for space exploration.

You hold in your hands a new, bolder framework for exploring our solar system that builds upon the policy that was announced by the President after months of careful deliberations within the Administration. This plan does not undertake exploration merely for the sake of adventure, however exciting that may be, but seeks answers to profound scientific and philosophical questions, responds to recent discoveries, will put in place revolutionary technologies and capabilities for the future, and will genuinely inspire our Nation, the world, and the next generation.

Our aim is to explore in a sustainable, affordable, and flexible manner. We believe the principles and roadmap set down in this document will stand the test of time. Its details will be subject to revision and expansion as new discoveries are made, new technologies are applied, and new challenges are met and overcome.

This plan is guided by the Administration's new space exploration policy, "A Renewed Spirit of Discovery: The President's Vision for U.S. Space Exploration," a copy of which is provided on the following pages. NASA is releasing this plan simultaneously with NASA's FY 2005 Budget Justification. This plan is fiscally responsible, consistent with the Administration's goal of cutting the budget deficit in half within the next five years.

I cannot overstate how much NASA will change in the coming years as this plan is implemented. I also cannot overstate how profound the rewards will be on this new course. With the support of Congress, the science community, the NASA civil and contractor workforce, and most importantly, the American public, we will embark on this very exciting future.

When Christopher Columbus made his voyages across the Atlantic in the 15th and 16th centuries, his ships carried the inscription "Following the light of the sun, we left the Old World." I look forward to joining you as we follow the light of the planets and the stars into the new worlds of the 21st century.

Sean O'Keefe
Administrator

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