

THE WHITE HOUSE

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REMARKS BY VICE PRESIDENT PENCE
AT SECOND MEETING OF THE NATIONAL SPACE COUNCIL

Space Station Processing Facility
Kennedy Space Center, Florida

10:25 A.M. EST

THE VICE PRESIDENT: NASA Administrator Lightfoot, thank you for that kind introduction. And why don't we give Robert another round of applause -- (applause) -- for doing an outstanding job leading this vital American agency. Thank you all for being here.

To members of the Cabinet, members of Congress, honored guests, gathered heroes: It is great to be back at America's Space Coast, at this historic place, with the men and women of the John F. Kennedy Space Center -- (applause) -- the pride of the nation. It's my honor to welcome you all here today to the second meeting of the newly reconstituted National Space Council.

Before I get started, standing here in Florida, allow me to take a moment to address what I know is on the hearts of every American, the terrible attack that took place in this state last week.

You know, in America, we mourn with those who mourn, and grieve with those who grieve. And let me assure all Floridians, especially those affected by this terrible attack, that as President Trump said, "Our entire nation, with one heavy heart, is praying" for you all. As the President said, "No child, no teacher, should ever be in danger in an American school."

Earlier this week, President Trump called on Congress to strengthen background checks, and yesterday directed the Attorney General and the Department of Justice to expedite the regulation of bump stocks.

Later today, I'll travel back to Washington to join the President for a listening session where we'll gather together with students, parents, and teachers from Parkland, Florida and from communities that have been impacted by past shootings, including Columbine and Sandy Hook.

And later this week, when the President meets with the nation's governors in Washington, D.C., President Trump will make the safety of our nation's schools and students our top priority. (Applause.)

This President and our entire administration will continue to focus renewed energy on making our schools safe, on taking a fresh look at giving law enforcement and families the tools they need to deal with those struggling with dangerous mental illness.

And as we move forward, we will continue to pray for God's grace and comfort for all the families impacted by this terrible attack in the difficult days that lie ahead. And let's also pray for God's wisdom, for all of us in positions of authority, that we might find a way to come together as a nation to confront and end this evil in our time, once and for all. So thank you for that.

Once again, it is my great honor to welcome all of you to this second meeting of the National Space Council. And I bring greetings, first and foremost, from a passionate champion of America's Space Coast and America's space program, a visionary who I can assure you is committed to American leadership and the boundless expanse of space. I bring greetings from the 45th President of the United States of America, President Donald Trump. (Applause.)

Just over a year ago, President Trump declared that our nation stands, in his words, "at the birth of a new millennium, ready to unlock the mysteries of space." And today, after the first year of our administration, the record is clear: Under President Donald Trump, America is leading in space once again. (Applause.)

It's really remarkable to think of all that we've accomplished together in the past 13 months. We relaunched this National Space Council, an organization of vital importance to America's future in space that had laid dormant for nearly a quarter-century.

Our administration established a new National Security Strategy that's spurring the development of space technology and the technology that we need to defend our national security and protect our way of life.

In December, President Trump signed an executive order, Space Policy Directive-1, that makes it a national policy of the United States to return to the moon, put Americans on Mars, and to bring renewed focus to human exploration in space. (Applause.)

Last week, the President proposed a budget that prepares NASA to extend its exploration expeditions toward the outer reaches of our solar system. It redirects government support of the International Space Station by 2025, and encourages America's pioneering space companies in the private sector to increase their activity in low-Earth orbit, where the government will be a partner and a customer, not a competitor. (Applause.)

And just last night, it was my great privilege to announce that we've selected our nominees for the National Space Council's Users Advisory Group. It's an extraordinary group of

Americans that's bringing together some of the brightest minds in this country to accelerate innovation across our nation's space enterprise.

All of the individuals nominated for the Users Advisory Group are pioneers in their field. They're explorers, they're builders; some have built rockets, some have built businesses. Each of them have played a critical role in building America's space future.

Now, many of them are with us here today. So I'd like to ask those among the 29 nominees of our Users Advisory Group to please stand and join me in thanking and congratulating these newest member of the Users Advisory Group for stepping up to serve our country at this vital moment in the life of our space program. (Applause.) Thank you.

We are, as President Trump says, a nation of pioneers. And I can assure you, he firmly believes that our past triumphs draw us onward and upward, to begin new journeys of exploration of our own, and reclaim our destiny as the vanguard of humanity's great adventure into the outer reaches of space.

What we choose to do in space, like every frontier, plays a vital role in the lives of our people and the future of this nation here on Earth. It accelerates scientific discovery, spurs groundbreaking innovations, fuels our businesses, serves as the eyes and ears of America's warfighters, and quite literally creates the jobs of the future.

And it isn't just here on America's Space Coast where you see the importance of our nation's space enterprise. You see it in Alabama and Mississippi, in California and Washington State, and in every one of America's 50 states where there are hardworking men and women who get up every day to help build the world's most advanced rockets, satellites, and spaceships.

In fact, thousands of companies across the country today are working on America's deep-space exploration systems alone. And as we continue to push further into our solar system, new businesses and entire enterprises will be built to seize the infinite possibilities before us. And there will be no limit to the jobs and prosperity that will be created across this country.

Over the past year, I've had the privilege to travel across this country to meet with men and women who are forging America's future in space. In Huntsville, Alabama, I met the engineers and technicians working on the Space Launch System that will send American astronauts back to the magnificent desolation of the moon and on to the red sands of Mars.

At California's Mojave Space Port, I climbed aboard a spaceship that will carry the first generation of space tourists to the edge of the Earth's atmosphere to peer into the cosmic expanse of the heavens. And I walked atop the massive vessel that will soon launch satellites while soaring through the skies. I saw with my own eyes the innovations that are born when America's entrepreneurs and captains of industry turn their gaze to the infinite frontier, and it's inspiring.

At Schriever Air Force Base, I saw the strength of our surveillance, navigation, and communication system that support America's men and women in uniform as they defend our families and our freedom around the world.

And at the Redstone Arsenal, I saw the steps we're taking to strengthen our national security capabilities in space and to meet threats that are posed by aggressive pursuit of antisatellite capabilities. America will continue to be as dominant in the heavens as we are on the Earth.

At the Johnson Space Center in Houston, I met with the newest class of American astronauts, inspiring Americans all. I saw their courage, the pioneering spirit that's always defined this country and continues to spur our people to break barriers, set new records, and carry our nation to even greater heights.

And this week, I have returned to America's Space Coast to tour the facilities of this launching pad for our national heroes and this permanent symbol of our nation's unquestioned leadership in space.

President Trump and our entire administration believe that America's prosperity, security, and even our national character, depend on American leadership in space. And over the past year, the world has seen the vital role that private enterprise plays to advance American leadership in outer space.

We've seen the increasing number of American businesses sending experiments to the International Space Station. We've witnessed the power of commercial satellites to reconnect isolated communities in the wake of natural disasters.

And of course, just a couple of weeks ago, the world watched with wonder as the Falcon Heavy blasted off from this very shoreline, and then moments later sent two of its boosters sailing back down to Earth, where they landed side-by-side, intact, less than a mile from where they'd lifted off. Very impressive indeed. (Applause.)

The evidence is clear: While the government can blaze new trails into exploring the outer expanse of space, like all frontiers, ultimately that will be settled by the dreams of our people, by the brilliance of our innovators, the energy of entrepreneurs, and the daring of our explorers together.

This truth echoes through the history of the Kennedy Space Center, named for a President who challenged the American people to marshal the best of our, in his words, "energies and skills" to "become the world's leading space-faring nation."

It was here, in the early summer morning of 1961, that Alan Shepard crawled into the Mercury capsule, Freedom 7, perched atop an 82-foot rocket, and ventured into the void. It was here, just over eight years later, that the crew of Apollo 11 carried the hopes and dreams of the American people to the moon and claimed our place as the undisputed leader of the exploration of space.

And it's here, today, in the 21st century, that the modern marvels that launch from these grounds prove that the public and private sectors are achieving far more together than we ever have apart.

Since January of last year, more than 20 rockets that were designed, built, and sent into space by America's pioneering space companies have launched from the Space Coast, with names like Falcon, Delta, Atlas, and Minotaur. And as these feats of American enterprise and ingenuity attest -- much more than the bridge to space, Kennedy Space Center is the bridge to the future. (Applause.)

Today, as we speak, American businesses are developing new rockets -- I saw a few last night -- spaceships, satellites that are taking us further into space than ever before, and renewing our confidence that we can and we will achieve the impossible once again.

Not long ago, no one would have dreamt of landing a vehicle on an asteroid to mine its minerals, or opening a private space station for tourists, scientists, and entrepreneurs, or operating a satellite refueling station hundreds of miles above the Earth.

But today, these are all emerging businesses. And like the railroads that opened up the American West to explorers and entrepreneurs, these technologies will extend the range of American action and values into new worlds, and usher in a new era of job creation and innovation driven by space.

But while American industry and technology have leapt toward the future, our government agencies too often have remained stuck in the past. Consider the case of satellite servicing to begin with -- a transformative new technology that will dramatically extend the life of our nation's satellites and unlock untold new opportunities in the space industry. In the past, whenever a satellite ran out of fuel, it had to be replaced. An expensive and time-consuming process -- like buying a new car every time it runs out of gas.

We now have within our reach the technology to get around this problem. But as this National Space Council has already come to understand, American businesses that want to launch satellite-servicing missions are often stifled by a convoluted maze of bureaucratic obstacles and outdated regulatory processes. Today's launch-licensing regime is plagued by burdensome government barriers, too. And to make matters worse, launch licenses can't be transferred often from one site to another, as we learned at the last meeting of the National Space Council.

So if a company receives its licenses to launch a rocket from the Kennedy Space Center, but then wants to move their mission to California, or even just a few miles away from Cape Canaveral, that same company must complete the entire process all over again, from start to finish.

The government has figured out how to honor driver's licenses across state lines. There's no reason we can't do the same for rockets. (Applause.)

And more to the point, there's no reason our own federal government should stand in the way of the trailblazing companies that are forging and re-forging American leadership in space.

Today, the National Space Council will discuss new policy recommendations to break down these bureaucratic hurdles. These recommendations, I believe, will transform the licensing regimes that oversee launch, re-entry, and new commercial space operations. And they'll empower American businesses to create the jobs of the future, attract new investment to our shores, and unlock new opportunities, new technologies, and new sources of American prosperity.

With these reforms, American private enterprise will usher in a new era of space leadership that will propel our economy, strengthen our national security, and rekindle our belief that America can, and will, continue to accomplish anything we put our minds to.

As President Trump has said, "It is America's destiny to be the leader amongst nations on our adventure into the great unknown." And we're going to write the next chapter of that adventure with American industry and American ingenuity as our partner. This I know we'll do because it's what the American people have always done.

If you think about it, less than 35 years after Lewis and Clark returned from their expedition to the wilderness, nearly half of our new nation's population had already moved west. There were pioneers and settlers, traders and entrepreneurs, and above all, they were Americans -- fellow travelers on our nation's never-ending journey to explore undiscovered lands, venture to far-off places, and expand the horizons of our influence.

No sooner had we tamed the Wild West that America's destiny beckoned us to the skies above. At the turn of the last century, two brothers from Ohio -- one of whom was born in Indiana -- sped down the sands of Kitty Hawk to become the first in flight. And just 66 years later, we won the race to the Moon.

Like many of you, some of the most precious memories of my youth were gathered around a black-and-white television, watching our heroes -- our heroes hurdling into the heavens and making history -- like Buzz Aldrin, who gathers with us today, the second man on the moon. (Applause.) And today, the rising generation is filled with the same wonder and pride every time they see the new triumphs and adventures of America's leadership in space.

Now, as then, every photograph of a faraway galaxy that we transmit across our solar system to our classrooms inspires us to dream big dreams. Every galactic discovery that helps us unlock a mystery here on Earth stretches our minds beyond the limits of our Earth-bound existence. And every rocket that we launch into the stars proves that, in America, the sky is not the limit.

Today, we stand at the dawn of a new era of American leadership in space. And 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. He said, and I quote, "America's challenge of today has forged man's destiny of tomorrow."

The Apollo astronauts were the first Americans to tell their children and grandchildren that they went to the heavens and stood on another place. It's our duty to ensure, by our work, that they will not be the last Americans to set foot in the great unknown.

So as we embark on our journey, and we begin our work again today, we go with confidence and, I believe, we go with faith. You know, today our nation awoke to the sad news of the passing of one of the greatest Americans of the 20th century, the Reverend Billy Graham. His ministry and his matchless voice changed the lives of millions and inspired our nation. Billy Graham ever reminded us to look to the ancient truths of God's word, asking with the Psalmist, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars...what is man that you are mindful of him?"

And so, even as we remember Reverend Graham this morning, and keep his family in our hearts, we continue this renewed work -- a renewed commitment to America's leadership in space with confidence and with a faith that has ever carried the American people through the great unknown. And we go forward with the courage to dream bigger, determined to work harder, and let's carry that same confidence of trailblazers who came before us, today -- and I have it.

With your support, with the good work of this National Space Council, with all who work and labor here at the Kennedy Space Center and throughout our space program, with the strong leadership of President Donald Trump, the support of the American people, and with God's help, I know America will once again astonish the world with the heights we reach and the wonders we achieve.

So thank you. (Applause.) God Bless you. God Bless this great work and God Bless the United States of America. (Applause.)

(Roundtable discussion commences.)

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(Roundtable discussion concludes.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, to members of the National Space Council, I think this has been a great discussion. Before we adjourn, I'd like to task a few items to assign.

To Administrator Lightfoot, I'd appreciate you working with Commerce and State to develop a strategy to develop the framework for a greater cooperation with our private-sector partners and, as appropriate, international partners as well. And I'd welcome your recommendations by our meeting this fall that we could forward to the President in the form of a decision memorandum.

And we already -- I think we touched on a number of issues in the previous recommendation, but this panel has been a great affirmation, I think, of the overall direction. But we'll take your steady counsel on this on an ongoing basis.

With that, let me thank all the members of the National Space Council, especially the members of the Cabinet who are here. Distinguished members of the Users Advisory Group, I encourage all of you that have an interest in the work of the National Space Council to avail yourself of the extraordinary women and men who have stepped forward to offer advice and counsel to the work of the National Space Council.

I want to thank the extraordinary men and women of the Kennedy Space Center for their hospitality. And to each and every one of you, thank you for your great interest in this. The work will continue, and America is leading in space again thanks to all of you.

Thank you. God Bless you. It's good to be with you all. (Applause.)

END

12:15 P.M. EST