

How America's Space Program Has Been Nearly Destroyed

by Marsha Freeman

Feb. 6—Virtually within minutes of President Kennedy's announcement, on May 25, 1961, that this nation would commit itself, before the end of the decade, "to land a man on the Moon and return him safely to the Earth," London-based think tanks and their American co-conspirators were plotting how to destroy the Apollo program. These masters of geopolitics, who controlled an empire on which the Sun never set through psychological, as well as military warfare, could see the potential danger to their future, of such a thrust into space.

Setting mankind on the path to take responsibility for discovering and developing what lay beyond our planet, would not only create a quantum leap in science, and lay the basis for successive technological revolutions, but would create a cultural paradigm shift, restoring the United States to a position of true leadership, based on creating the future to fulfill the "common aims of mankind." An America that returned to the moral imperative of its Constitution would be an inspiration to the subjugated nations of the third world, and help give impetus to their drive to free themselves from the yoke of empire, support for which was, in fact, a hallmark of President



President Kennedy announcing, on Sept. 12, 1962 at Rice University in Texas, that because of scientific progress the exploration of space was inevitable, and that the U.S.A. should begin "before this decade is out," to inspire and engage the nation.

Kennedy's short time in the White House.

This potential of the space program to reshape human history for the future, was recognized at the time by only a handful of visionaries. Among them were the German space pioneers, who had an outlook informed by the German classics and the philosophical outlook of the Renaissance. And leaders such as NASA Administrator James Webb, who represented the American Hamiltonian economic tradition, then most recently expressed by former President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. To them, the "space program" was not a collection of separate, seemingly unconnected missions, but, as German-American space pioneer Krafft Ehricke would explain, an "extraterrestrial imperative." Exploring space is an expression of the very essence of mankind's creativity, which ennobles humanity. It

is imperative, because the alternative belief, that there is a limit to man's creative capabilities, and therefore limits to growth, denies mankind's ability to create his future, and is ultimately, as we see today, a death sentence.

The goals of the space program, which require decades to carry out and substantial resources to be met, depend upon leadership from the White House. It is,

therefore, indicative of the quality of the presidencies since John F. Kennedy, that there has been no visionary space program carried out since Apollo.

The Apollo ‘Dead End’

As NASA’s budget was steadily increased into the mid-1960s to carry out the mission of President Kennedy’s Apollo program, and then the landing on the Moon became a reality, intense attacks on the space program gained momentum. This assault was originated and led by institutions of the British Empire from London. It was designed to appeal to every possible constituency, in order to marshal enough “public” opposition to cripple the program. The publication of London’s Tavistock Institute, *Human Relations*, proposed that the space program was producing “redundant” and “supernumerary” scientists and engineers. “There would soon be two scientists for every man, woman, and dog in the society,” one report warned. Others complained that the space program was absorbing so much of the nation’s technical manpower, there would be shortages in other fields of science.

“Liberal” think tanks, such as the Brookings Institution, proposed that the space agency be concerned with the impact of its activity on society. Brookings charged that the money “spent in space” (sic) would “require vast investments of men, and materials, and creative effort—investments which could be profitably applied also to other areas of human endeavor,” such as the alleviation of poverty. A series of “sociological” studies of the space program, foisted upon NASA in the 1960s, likewise warned of the negative “social consequences” of the Apollo program.

The “religious right” was mobilized, to object to this intrusion by man “into God’s firmament.” This argument was eloquently countered by Pope Paul VI, who stated that all of God’s creation was under man’s dominion, and he blessed the Apollo astronauts before their journey, watched Neil Armstrong’s first step live on television, and met with the Apollo 11 crew upon their return.

While President Kennedy was alive, and through the presidency of Lyndon Johnson, who was committed to accomplishing the goal the martyred President had set, these frontal assaults on the Apollo program and the psyche of the American public gained limited traction, as Americans, and people around the world, watched in excitement and anticipation, as mankind took his first steps off planet Earth. But the seeds had been planted.

By the time Neil Armstrong took the first step on to the Moon, in July 1969, the effort was well underway to undermine the optimism and future-orientation of space exploration, and place in its stead the mind-deadening rock-drug counterculture and the Malthusian zero-growth, anti-science outlook, which was exactly what Krafft Ehrlicke had warned against.

The Dionysian drug-laced Woodstock Festival took place only three weeks after the Moon landing, and in March of the next year the first Earth Day celebrations were held, unleashing a wave of mass recruitment into the anti-science anti-human environmentalist movement of Britain’s Prince Philip.

But the legacy of the Apollo program is still evident today, most notably in the leaders of numerous space missions, many of whom as youngsters were inspired by the lunar landings, to study science and engineering and dedicate their careers to exploration. In recent years, there has been a relentless drive to erase from memory the inspiration of President Kennedy and Apollo. Myths about the Apollo program were created, in a rewriting of history, in order to steal from humanity the pride of what mankind had accomplished and the hope that such a mobilization could be launched in the future.

It is often stated, that the Apollo paradigm should not be repeated, because the program was a failure, a “dead end.” Not in President Kennedy’s mind! In his announcement of the lunar landing program, the President included “an additional \$23 million to accelerate the development of the Rover nuclear rocket. This gives the promise of someday providing a means for even more exciting and ambitious exploration of space, perhaps beyond the Moon, perhaps to the very end of the Solar System itself.” The Apollo program was to be just the beginning.

One reads in history books that there was no bold follow-on to Apollo because the American public “lost interest” in space. This assertion is also not true. It is estimated that one million people came to Cape Canaveral on July 29, 1969, to watch the Apollo 11 crew launch to the Moon. An estimated 600 million people around the world watched it live on TV. After the astronauts returned, their “Giantstep Apollo-11” tour took them to 24 countries, where they were enthusiastically greeted by thousands of citizens at each stop. In the view of most of the population, the Space Age was just getting underway.

Even before the Apollo 11 mission, at a time when much of the hardware for the lunar landing was under

development, NASA Administrator Webb had stressed to the Johnson Administration and to the Congress that post-Apollo manned space programs had to be decided upon, authorized, and begun immediately. If not, he warned, the capabilities the nation had created would be dismantled.

Although personally committed to the Apollo legacy of JFK, Lyndon Johnson and his presidency lived in the shadow of the assassin's rifle. President Johnson once told a close associate that the "cross-hairs" of a rifle scope were on his neck. Under pressure from London and Wall Street, Johnson plunged the nation into the Vietnam War, draining billions of dollars from the economy and turning millions of Americans, particularly young Americans, against their own government. These developments, all engineered by the oligarchical interests who had murdered John F. Kennedy, combined with the financial costs of his effort to alleviate poverty through his "Great Society" programs, led President Lyndon Johnson, once President Kennedy's greatest supporter for an aggressive space program, to propose cuts to NASA's budget. The peak funding year for NASA was actually 1965, four years prior to the Moon landing.

By 1969 Richard Nixon was in the White House, and the thousands of young American boys were being shipped home from Vietnam in body bags. The optimism of 1961 was being replaced by the disillusionment and cynicism of 1969. The American people increasingly mistrusted their own government, a government which had covered up President Kennedy's assassination.

As the optimism of the Kennedy years disappeared, helped by a well-funded campaign and media barrage, planning for mankind's future in the Solar System was overwhelmed and nearly buried in the calls for "limits to growth," the "protection" of the environment at the expense of economic development, and the proposition that the age of progress was over.

The Failure of Austerity Economics

Another myth that has been promulgated to "explain" the multiple near-deaths of the space program, is that NASA did not know what to do next, after it had attained the goal set by President Kennedy. This assertion also was not true.



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The drug-laced Woodstock Festival, three weeks after the Moon landing, unleashed a wave of mass recruitment into the anti-science, anti-human environmentalist movement of Britain's Prince Philip.

Months before the lunar landing, President Nixon had established a Space Task Group, headed by Vice President Spiro Agnew, to develop policy recommendations for NASA's programs through the 1970s. Two months after the landing, in September 1969, the Task Group's report was presented to the President, based on German space pioneer, Wernher von Braun's "Integrated Space Program, 1970-1990." The outline included an Earth-orbital space station, an extended Apollo program that would culminate in a lunar surface base, a family of new transportation systems for deep-space exploration, and, by 1985, a temporary base on the surface of Mars.

The fight within the Nixon Administration over the future of the space program was intense and continued for years. What ultimately determined the outcome, however, was not anything that had to do with the merits of space exploration. Rather, the failure to continue an aggressive "space program" was a result of Richard Nixon's slavish servitude to the interests of London and Wall Street finance.

In 1968 the British government decoupled the British pound from silver, leading to the destruction of the post-war system of fixed exchange rates that had enabled dramatic economic growth since 1945. This British move provoked enormous instability in the global economy and finally led, on August 15, 1971, to the announcement of radical economic austerity measures by the Nixon White House. The setting of wage and

price controls, and taking the dollar off the gold reserve standard were, in fact, what would ultimately decide the fate of a far-sighted civilian space program.

Some advisors to the President lobbied for continuing just the planetary and space science missions, and that, at a reduced level. Many voices advised President Nixon that the expense of the manned programs was unsustainable in the economic crisis the country faced, and was a luxury the country could not afford.

After many months, stretching into years, of wavering, President Nixon finally decided that he did not want ending manned space exploration to be part of his legacy. So on Jan. 5, 1971 he announced that the United States would build a reusable Space Transportation System, or shuttle, that would take men and materiel back and forth to low-Earth orbit. Completely missing from Nixon's proposal were the space station, (the destination for the Shuttle, in von Braun's plan), the follow-on development of the Moon, and the robotic and then manned missions to Mars. They were gone.

Over the succeeding years of the Ford and Carter administrations, presidential programs for space exploration were characterized by a lack of vision, or failed economic policies, and sometimes, both.

On Jan. 28, 1986, seventy three seconds after lift-off, the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded with seven astronauts on board and in full sight of the visitors at Cape Canaveral, including the students who were there to cheer on Christa McAuliffe, the first Teacher in Space. President Ronald Reagan cancelled that night's scheduled State of the Union address to speak to a nation that was in shock and mourning. At 5 PM, from the Oval Office, the President said: "We'll continue our quest. There will be more shuttle flights and more shuttle crews. . . . Nothing ends here; our hopes and our journeys continue."

President Reagan lived up to his promise, and took the unprecedented step of allocating more than \$1 billion to NASA to replace the Challenger with a new orbiter, later named Endeavor. In his 1984 State of the Union address, the President had also instructed NASA to build an orbiting space station within a decade. With a replacement Shuttle orbiter, and the start of a space station program, it appeared NASA had been given the go-ahead for the next step.

There is no question of President Reagan's intention to continue the exploration of space. Reagan's commitment to a Renaissance for frontier work in science and space exploration had already been signaled through

his collaboration with Lyndon LaRouche in the initiation of the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Unfortunately, after the attempted assassination of Reagan in March of 1981, circles associated with Vice President Bush increasingly gained the upper hand in his administration, and policies of brutal economic austerity and free trade became the order of the day. The economic agenda became one of reducing government spending, cutting taxes, and letting the "free market" run the economy, effectively halting any progress in areas of research and development that the President otherwise personally supported, such as advanced nuclear energy technology. It also became impossible to fulfill Reagan's directives for the space program. At one point, the White House even tried, unsuccessfully, to find a private company to buy the Space Shuttle fleet.

This fatal economic flaw would also be characteristic of later space initiatives, which would not be funded in times of economic distress.

Following the 2003 Columbia Space Shuttle accident, President George W. Bush unveiled the Constellation program at NASA headquarters. The outline was to create the launch vehicles and new crew vehicles to return Americans to the Moon, with the long-term goal of missions to Mars. But there was a catch. In order to "save money," the work on Constellation would begin only after the Space Shuttles were retired from service, with the deadline set for 2010 to do that. This meant that, by design, there would be a gap of minimally five years, between the end of the Shuttle program, and the first flight of the new crew vehicle. This meant that tens of thousands of engineers and technicians—some of the most skilled in the country—who kept the Shuttle fleet flying, would be out of a job. And as for all of the subsequent complaining by the Congress about U.S. dependence upon the Russians for transporting our astronauts to the International Space Station, they have known that would be the case since the Constellation program was announced in 2003.

With the Congress focused on creating the image of the Russian "evil empire," and complaining about the money paid to Russia for Soyuz flights, it is rarely mentioned that the actual danger in depending solely upon the Russian Soyuz for astronaut transport is that if there is a problem with the Soyuz, there is no backup, and the station would have to be abandoned.

Following all of the initial media hype surrounding the announcement of the Constellation initiative, in the months that followed, all the way through to the end of

his two terms, President Bush never requested the money required to keep the program on track. Unlike President Kennedy, who affirmed his support for Apollo throughout his presidency, President Bush never mentioned the program again, throughout his remaining six years in the White House following his announcement of the Constellation program. Instead, the Bush Administration gave America the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the biggest government bail-out of Wall Street speculators in U.S. history.

There Is Still Time

By the time Barack Obama became President, the Constellation program was behind schedule and seriously over budget as a result of the years of underfunding by the Bush Administration. It was estimated by a review panel convened by President Obama that NASA would need a budget increase of about \$3 billion per year to keep the Constellation program on track. But President Obama had no intention of taking that route.

Instead, the White House cancelled the Constellation program outright in 2010, and announced that the “private sector,” (with massive financial subsidies from NASA) would provide cargo transport to the space station, and would also develop vehicles to transport station crews. The new NASA Ares rocket to take astronauts to the station was cancelled, as was the Orion crew capsule. The Altair lander that would deliver astronauts on the surface of the Moon was also cancelled, along with the technology needed for a return to the Moon. The Congress rebelled, as did former Apollo astronauts. The government, it was charged, was abdicating its responsibility to continue a space exploration program for the benefit of the future of the nation.

The taffy pull between the White House and Capitol Hill on space policy led to the paralysis of NASA programs, and finally led to a series of compromises, which has left space exploration underfunded and directionless. Under relentless attack for its killing of the manned space program, the Administration invented an Asteroid Redirect Mission, which has no purpose at all, and



Neil Armstrong took the first step on the Moon, July 20, 1969.

NASA

wastes the precious resources still resident in the space agency and U.S. aerospace industry.

All of this has occurred, as the Obama Administration has demanded billions of dollars for military rearmament and has carried out war provocations against both Russia and China, nations which we should be looking to as partners in space exploration instead.

It is fortunate that no other nation has followed the mis-leadership of the United States in space policy. There is a readily-available opportunity to return our space program to our future. China is carrying out a step-by-step program of exploration of the Moon, which will undoubtedly culminate in manned missions. One aim will be to exploit the Moon’s resources, such as the rare isotope, helium-3, needed for fusion power. Russia is readying a series of robotic missions to the Moon, and the European Space Agency, Japan, and India are planning lunar exploration, as well. The United States could readily join, and contribute to these missions.

Under the new financial architecture which has been created in China, and globally through Chinese initiative, the option exists to replace failed and self-destructive trans-Atlantic financial and economic policies that have crippled NASA for decades, with economic policies based on promoting the science drivers, such as space exploration, that will reshape the Earth, and open the cosmos for mankind’s future.