

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks on Signing a Memorandum on Reinvigorating America's Human Space Exploration Program

December 11, 2017

The President. Thank you very much, Vice President Pence, for helping—where's our Vice President?

Vice President Michael R. Pence. Right here, Mr. President.

The President. Great job, great job—to restore American leadership in space. So important.

Cabinet members, General Selva, Deputy Secretary Shanahan, Acting Administrator Lightfoot, Members of Congress, and the National Space Council: Thank you all for being here. And especially, Mike, as I said, I want to thank you. I know how active you've been and how important this is to you. So we appreciate it. Thank you very much.

We also welcome astronauts Christina Koch and Peggy Whitson. Christina, thank you. Peggy, thank you very much. Peggy recently returned from the International Space Station and has now spent an incredible 665 days in space. You'll have to explain that. That sounds tough. [Laughter] More than any other American, more than any woman ever.

Finally, we're honored to be joined by Apollo astronaut Jack Schmitt. Exactly 45 years ago, almost to the minute, Jack became one of the last Americans to land on the Moon. Today we pledge that he will not be the last. And I suspect we'll be finding other places to land in addition to the Moon.

What do you think, Jack? Where's Jack?

Former National Aeronautics and Space Administration astronaut Harrison H. "Jack" Schmitt. Right here. [Laughter]

The President. What do you think, Jack? We'll find some other places out there? There are a couple of other places, right?

Mr. Schmitt. Yes, we should. Learn from the Moon.

The President. We'll learn. The directive I'm signing today will refocus America's space program on human exploration and discovery. It marks an important step in returning American astronauts to the Moon for the first time since 1972 for long-term exploration and use. This time, we will not only plant our flag and leave our footprint, we will establish a foundation for an eventual mission to Mars. And perhaps, someday, to many worlds beyond.

This directive will ensure America's space program once again leads and inspires all of humanity. The pioneer spirit has always defined America, and we're picking that up in many other fields. I think you see that. I think it's obvious. All you have to do is look at what's happening with the markets and all of the great things that are happening. We're leading in many different fields again, and it'll get more and more obvious as you go along.

After braving the vast unknown and discovering the new world, our forefathers did not only merely sail home—and in some cases, never to return—they stayed, they explored, they

built, they guided, and through that pioneering spirit, they imagined all of the possibilities that few dared to dream.

Today, the same spirit beckons us to begin new journeys of exploration and discovery, to lift our eyes all the way up to the heavens, and once again imagine the possibilities waiting in those big, beautiful stars if we dare to dream big. And that's what our country is doing again: We're dreaming big.

This is a giant step toward that inspiring future and toward reclaiming America's proud destiny in space. And space has so much to do with so many other applications, including a military application. So we are the leader, and we're going to stay the leader, and we're going to increase it manyfold.

I'd like to invite Vice President Pence, if he would, to say a few words. He's been leading this for me, and I appreciate it.

Mr. Vice President.

Vice President Pence. Mr. President, thank you. And thank you for your leadership and thank you for the honor to be here today in my capacity as Chairman of the National Space Council for what I believe is a momentous occasion in the history of American space exploration.

[At this point, Vice President Pence made brief remarks, concluding as follows.]

Mr. President, you've said that the pioneer spirit has always defined America. And by your action today, with this clear vision—returning Americans to the Moon, preparing to lead to Mars and beyond—you're ensuring, Mr. President, that America will lead in space in the future and for generations to come. And I thank you for the honor of being a part of this.

The President. Thank you, Mike. Thank you. This is very exciting and very important for our country. And it also happens to mean jobs. Jobs. *[Laughter]* And we love jobs too, right? Congratulations.

[The President signed the memorandum.]

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:58 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Paul J. Selva, USAF; Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick M. Shanahan; Robert M. Lightfoot, Jr., Acting Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); and NASA astronauts Christina H. Koch and Peggy A. Whitson. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the full remarks of Vice President Pence.

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