

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Message on National Astronaut Day, 2025

May 5, 2025

Sixty-four years ago today, a brave American sat in the cockpit of the *Mercury* rocket, ready to face the unknown. After years of scientific advancement and growing competition in space exploration, Commander Alan B. Shepard undertook a dangerous mission that held the promise of groundbreaking achievement, national pride, and a future defined by American leadership in space.

With three simple words—"light this candle"—Shepard launched into the vast expanse of space, becoming the first American to break the bounds of Earth. His spacecraft, *Freedom 7*, was a tribute to the seven Project Mercury astronauts, and to one of our Nation's founding principles: freedom.

That same spirit of courage, innovation, and resolve has defined American space exploration ever since. Just 8 years later, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin planted the Stars and Stripes on the Moon. Last month, we saw the same strength again when I ordered the rescue of stranded astronauts Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams, whose 8-day mission turned into a 286-day journey aboard the International Space Station. It was the vitality of our Nation's space programs that rose to the challenge and brought them safely home.

As we celebrate National Astronaut Day, we honor the legacy of those who have blazed the trail into the final frontier. Under my leadership, America's space program will continue to push the boundaries of discoveries, with bold plans for lunar missions, Mars exploration, and beyond. By fostering innovation, strengthening our partnerships with private space companies, and advancing our technological capabilities, we are ensuring that the United States remains the global leader in space for generations to come.

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Names: Aldrin, Edwin E. "Buzz," Jr.; Williams, Sunita L.; Wilmore, Barry E. "Butch".

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