

## Telephone Remarks to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Mars Science Laboratory Team at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California

August 13, 2012

*The President.* Hello, everybody.

*Jet Propulsion Laboratory Director Charles Elachi.* Good morning, Mr. President.

*The President.* Who am I speaking with?

*Director Elachi.* This is Charles Elachi, the director of JPL. And we have a room full of the mission operation personnel. This is *Curiosity* mission operation on Mars.

*The President.* Well, it is great to talk to all of you. And I just want you to know that we could not be more excited about what you've been doing.

Somebody asked me the other day whether you've already found Martians. [*Laughter*] I told them we have to give you a little bit of time. But we know you're all hard at work and you're getting some well-deserved rest after a successful landing. And I just wanted to call and say congratulations to the entire Mars Science Laboratory team, and really all of JPL, on last Monday's incredible success.

Through your dedicated efforts, *Curiosity* stuck her landing and captured the attention and imagination of millions of people not just across our country, but people all around the world, including Times Square. And what you did on Mars was incredibly impressive. Those 76 pyrotechnics going off in perfect succession and the 500,000 lines of code working exactly the way you guys had ordered them, so it's really mind-boggling what you've been able to accomplish. And being able to get that whole landing sequence to work the way you did is a testimony to your team.

I especially want to congratulate Charles Elachi, the head of JPL; the entry descent and landing lead, Adam Steltzner, who helped devise the final step of this amazing descent, the Sky Crane System. What you've accomplished embodies the American spirit, and your passion and your commitment is making a difference. And your hard work is now paying dividends, because our expectation is that *Curiosity* is going to be telling us things that we did

not know before and laying the groundwork for an even more audacious undertaking in the future, and that's a human mission to the Red Planet.

I understand there's a special Mohawk guy that's working on the mission. [*Laughter*] He's been one of the many stars of the show last Sunday night. And I, in the past, thought about getting a Mohawk myself—[*laughter*]—but my team keeps on discouraging me. And now that he's received marriage proposals and thousands of new Twitter followers, I think that I'm going to go back to my team and see if it makes sense. [*Laughter*]

*Director Elachi.* That's going to be the new fashion at JPL. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* It does sound like NASA has come a long way from the white shirt, black dark-rimmed glasses, and the pocket protectors. [*Laughter*] You guys are a little cooler than you used to be. [*Laughter*]

As all of you know, my administration has put a big focus on improving science and technology, engineering and math education. And this is the kind of thing that inspires kids across the country. They're telling their moms and dads they want to be part of a Mars mission, maybe even the first person to walk on Mars. And that kind of inspiration is the byproduct of work of the sort that you guys have done.

So not only do I want to congratulate the team, I want to call out a few of the leaders of the group, including Adam, but also Peter Theisinger, Richard Cook, John Grotzinger, John Grunsfeld. And I'd like to congratulate and thank all of our international partners—Spain, Russia, Germany, France, Canada, Italy, Japan, Australia—all of them contributed, I know, to the instrumentation *Curiosity* landed on Martian surface—and all the scientists who are part of the JPL team.

So you guys have done an outstanding job. You made us all proud. You've made NASA proud. You guys are examples of American

know-how and ingenuity, and it's really an amazing accomplishment. So we can't wait to start hearing back from *Curiosity* and finding out what's going on. We're fortunate to be part of a society that can reach beyond our planet and explore frontiers that were only imagined by our ancestors. So it's inspiring to all of us.

I'm going to give you guys a personal commitment to protect these critical investments in science and technology. I thank you for devoting your lives to this cause. And if, in fact, you do make contact with Martians, please let me know right away. [Laughter] I've got a lot of other things on my plate, but I suspect that that will go to the top of the list. [Laughter] Even if they're just microbes, it will be pretty exciting. [Laughter]

*Director Elachi.* Well, thank you, Mr. President. And on behalf of all us at NASA, we thank you for taking the time to give us a call. And hopefully, we inspired some of the millions of young people who were watching this landing. Thank you again.

*The President.* Well, you've already inspired us, but I know that the photographs that are

going to start coming back are going to be remarkable and amazing. And again, you guys should be remarkably proud. Really what makes us best as a species is this curiosity that we have and this yearning to discover and know more and push the boundaries of knowledge. And you are perfect examples of that, and we couldn't be more grateful to you.

So congratulations. Keep up the great work.

*Director Elachi.* Thank you very much. And have a good day.

*The President.* Okay. Bye-bye, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. aboard Air Force One while en route to Offutt Air Force Base, NE. In his remarks, he referred to Bobak Ferdowsi, Mission Engineer, Adam Steltzner, Lead Mechanical Engineer, Peter Theisinger, Project Manager, Richard Cook, Deputy Project Manager, and John Grotzinger, Project Scientist, Mars Science Laboratory; and John M. Grunsfeld, Associate Administrator, Science Mission Directorate, National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

## Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Council Bluffs, Iowa August 13, 2012

*The President.* Hello, Iowa! It's good to be back! Well, it is good to be back in Iowa. I miss you guys.

*Audience members.* Obama! Obama! Obama!

*The President.* Thank you!

First of all, can everybody please give Patricia a big round of applause for the great introduction? A couple other people I want to acknowledge: your outstanding former Governor, now I think the best Secretary of Agriculture we've ever had, Tom Vilsack; Congressman Leonard Boswell; and Mayor Tom Hanafan.

See, the sun is coming out; I love being back in Iowa. Now, we're starting here in Council Bluffs, but we're going to be heading east, and I think I'm going to end at the State Fair. Michelle has told me I cannot have a fried Twinkie. [Laughter] But I will be checking out the butter cow, and I understand this year

there's a chocolate moose. [Laughter] So I'm going to have to take a look at that if I can. The last time I went to the State Fair, Secret Service let me do the bumper cars, but they said this year—I wasn't President yet, so I could do that. [Laughter] But not this time.

Now, before I get started, I just want to say a few words about the drought, because it's had such an impact on this State and all across the country. Right now folks here in Iowa and across the heartland, we're suffering from one of the worst droughts in 50 years. Farmers, ranchers depend on a good crop season to pay the bills and put a roof over their heads. And I know things are tough right now.

The best way to help these States is for the folks in Congress to pass a farm bill that not only helps farmers and ranchers respond to natural disasters, but also makes some necessary reforms and gives farmers and ranchers