

‘I Say to Congress: Look at What We Have Done’

Leaders of America’s return to space spoke to the nation and its elected officials about America’s future in space, on August 2. NASA Administrator James Bridenstine and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk addressed a press conference at the Houston Space Center only hours after astronauts Bob Behnken and Doug Hurley had splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico, returning from a 64-day mission to the International Space Station. The astronauts both briefly conveyed their thanks to all NASA and SpaceX teams on the flight, before Bridenstine and Musk spoke. It was the first mission of American astronauts on an American rocket and capsule, since the retirement of the Space Shuttles nine years ago. We publish here the remarks of the NASA and SpaceX chiefs.

James Bridenstine: I’m going to take my mask off for just a few seconds here, and just say thank you to everybody who participated in this. You know, we just saw Bob and Doug; and I think the rest of us are going to have memories now for the rest of our lives, [of] when they launched. In fact, we’ll have memories of the day they didn’t launch, and then, three days later, coming back and doing the whole thing again—not knowing whether or not they were going to go. “50-50” on the weather. And then, sure enough, the skies opened up and we were able to launch Bob and Doug.

I want to say a few words about what champions they are; beyond just being the first crew to fly on Dragon [the SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule—ed.], it goes beyond that. They knew that when they were doing this, it was a test flight. They also knew, that they were going to be responsible for conducting a lot of operations on the International Space Station for a period of months—to include what ended up being four space walks; spending that extended period of time on the International Space Station; and then flying back. And amazingly, coming off the jet right now after being weightless for the last 63 days; coming off the jet, sitting down, and doing a public event.

And I gotta tell you, I’ve never flown into space, but from my,— that’s not normally done. It’s very difficult. But they wanted to take that opportunity to connect

with the American people on this momentous occasion. And you just can’t put into words, just how important this was for our country, to have access to space again from our own soil.

So, again, congratulations to Bob and Doug and their families. What an amazing day for the United States of America.



NASA/Bill Ingalls

America’s return to space returns to Earth. The Crew Dragon capsule touches the surface of the Gulf of Mexico on Aug. 2 after an apparently perfect undocking and return from the International Space Station.

‘We Want To Be Flying to the Moon’

I would also say, that what we just saw is the beginning of what will be a whole lot more activity in the future. Right now, when we talk about “commercial crew,” we’re going to go—for the Dragon—we’re going to go from development to operations. Of course we’re always going to learn, and we’re always going to modify, but making that transition from development to operations is going to be a challenge. But the NASA

team is up for it. But it goes beyond that, because we still have [Boeing's crew capsule—ed.] Starliner, and we need to get Starliner flying. And then we've got to get [NASA's space capsule] Orion flying. And we've got to get Starship [SpaceX's very large-capacity crewed rocket] flying—[comment from Musk off-mike]—a lot of stars, absolutely.

So, look, there is a lot to do in front of us. But here's what we know. We know that when members of Congress come together in a bipartisan way, and they fund NASA, amazing things can happen. Right now, we have before the House and the Senate, the biggest budget request in NASA's history, in nominal dollars. By the way, right now we have the biggest budget NASA has ever had, in nominal dollars. Now if you look at real dollars, Apollo might have us beat by a little bit. But we're heading in the right direction.

And next year—if we get the budget request that is before us right now, next year we're going to go up an order of magnitude. And that is necessary. Because today we're flying into low Earth orbit. And in a few short years, we want to be flying to the Moon. And not just go once or twice. We want to go sustainably, with a purpose.

We're going to the Moon sustainably. We're going to learn how to live and work on another world, for long periods of time. We're going to use the resources of the Moon in order to live and work [there]. And we're going to take all of that knowledge on to Mars. That's what we're able to accomplish because of the bipartisan support we've had, in the House and in the Senate, for the budget that we have right now.

And what I'm asking for our Members of Congress to do is, look at what we've done with what we have; and if you fund us at our budget request level, we will be on the Moon. And we will be successfully on the Moon with our commercial partners, and with our international partners.



NASA/Bill Ingalls

Astronaut Doug Hurley reclines on a stretcher on the recovery ship after exiting the capsule, which shows the scorch marks from 3,000°C temperatures during descent through the atmosphere. After months of weightlessness in space, human beings are unable to walk any distance or stand for any length of time.

So today was an amazing day. It was a historic day. It's been nine years since America launched and landed from its own soil. And yet here we are. But the next step is, we're going on to the Moon and then on to Mars. This is about momentum. It starts today, and it finishes when we put an American flag on Mars.

All right: I've got the honor to introduce somebody whom we are very grateful for, to help us accomplish this mission. I've said it before and I'll say it again: NASA seeks to be one customer of many customers in a very robust commercial marketplace in low Earth orbit. And we want to have numerous providers that compete, on cost and innovation and safety. And I will tell you, there was a moment—maybe not even a year ago—... when we had some significant challenges. We might have had a few disagreements on parachutes. We might have had a disagreement on—maybe we need to change the titanium, because of its reactivity with nitrogen tetroxide ...

I sent a tweet, Elon, and I know you remember this. And since we've had a number of dialogues: I sent a tweet, and I said "It's time to deliver." And I tweeted it at Elon Musk. And I want to tell you, Elon, you responded absolutely magnificently. And you have, in fact, delivered. You have delivered beyond anything

any of us would have expected. And I will also say that all of the reports I'm getting from all of the teams on commercial crew, is that this mission went as good as we could have hoped. And we are so grateful for the team at SpaceX; and the great team in NASA's commercial crew program; and all of the operators that helped us get to this point.

So I just want to say "Thank you." Elon Musk, the time is yours.

'Let's Make Human Life Multiplanetary'

Elon Musk: [Lets out a whoop.] Thanks, Jim. After these great words that were spoken, I'm not sure I have much to add to Bob and Doug, Jim. But I do think, what this heralds, really, is fundamentally a new era in space-flight; a new era in space exploration. We're going to go to the Moon; we're going to have a base on the Moon; we're going to send people to Mars; and make life multiplanetary. And I think this day heralds a new age of space exploration. That's what it's all about.

And this is the result of an incredible amount of work. From people at SpaceX, people at NASA—Hey, Kathy! [Kathryn Lueders, NASA Commercial Crew Program Manager]—so much! Eighteen years. This

has been 18 years to finally fly people to orbit and back, and I mean, I really came here because I wanted to see Bob and Doug, to be totally frank. Thank goodness!

[Long pause, and laughing] I think my entire adrenalin just dumped. Thank God! You know, I'm not very religious, but I prayed for this one.

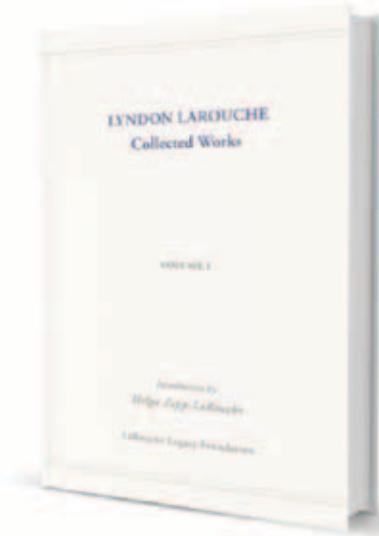
So, just once again, thanks everyone—SpaceX, NASA, everyone, Air Force, our key suppliers, that incredible work. Thanks again.

And this is something that the whole world can take some pleasure in, and can really look at this as an achievement of humanity. And these are difficult times, when, you know, there's not that much good news. And I think this is one of those things that is universally good, no matter where you are on planet Earth. This is a good thing, and I hope it brightens your day. Thank you.

Mark Geyer, Houston Space Center Director: Thank you, Jim and Elon, for those inspiring words. You know, all of us are here because we believe in this country, and [in] exploring space. We believe in humanity's destiny to explore the Solar System. And as was said, this is a milestone moment, and it's an honor to be here. So thanks again for coming. Thanks for everything you do for the mission of NASA and the work that we do.

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