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My Dear Mr. President:

David Bell has passed on to me your request for my views on the current NASA budget questions. This letter is in response to that request.

1. Should the manned lunar landing be regarded as the top priority NASA program -- or as one of several top priority programs?

Considerations of national prestige have been a principal influence upon our space activities since 1958. While many other factors and objectives influence our space efforts, the national prestige factor is virtually the foundation for both congressional and public acceptance and support of the budget required for non-military space programs. Of all those programs, the moon shot is most firmly established as the principal national prestige project. Any reassignment of new priority status would be confusing, seemingly contradictory, and would reopen to nonconstructive debate judgments already settled in Congress and the country about the overall role and size of the space program. In the interest of retaining the program's efficiency and momentum -- and retaining the developing public confidence and support, also -- there should be no change in priority at this time, in my judgment.

2. Would additional funding in the next fiscal year substantially speed up the moon shot schedule?

This question -- and the related question of the amount of such additional funding that might be useful -- is not answerable without full study and discussion from the administrative viewpoint. If it were firmly determined that additional funds would speed up the schedule, then I believe the request for such funds should be made. The determination of the final decision with regard to this question should, I believe, show the concurrence and accord of the NASC. I would recommend that this question be formally placed before the Council for consideration and decision in view of the possibilities raised by the contractor for speeding up the moon shot schedule.

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3. Should funds for other NASA programs be shifted to the lunar program?

My judgment is no. Confusion and demoralization would result within our other programs -- and congressional criticism would be invited for the entire program -- if the emphasis of our non-military space activities appeared to be concentrating exclusively upon the manned moon shot. Our announced policies, domestically and at the United Nations, have emphasized our national objective for broad exploration and development of peaceful uses for outer space. Many of the programs from which funds might be taken are the programs of eventually greater and more direct interest to other countries than the moon shot. These factors are compelling against reallocation of funds supporting other projects.

4. Should congressional agreements be sought permitting NASA to commit funds on the expectation of future favorable action on a supplemental appropriation request?

While agreement by the congressional leadership might be taken safely as assurance that such funds would be forthcoming, the leadership could give no meaningful assurance about the possible adverse reactions such a course might precipitate in regard to the regular fiscal year appropriations for NASA. Such a course would raise questions as to the urgency of the programs from which such funds would be diverted. Any action to accelerate the manned lunar landing program should require Congress to share the responsibility for taking or not taking such a step. If it is established fully that the moon shot program can actually be accelerated by additional funds -- or that it would suffer seriously in the absence of a supplemental -- I believe that the case should be presented directly to the full Congress regardless of other factors.

It is important that the request to Congress in this sector have unanimous support from all concerned within the administration and that is the purpose of my recommendation that the question be immediately placed before the Council for consideration and decision.

Sincerely,

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