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PRESS BRIEFING
BY
ADMIRAL RICHARD H. TRULY

The Briefing Room

11:25 A.M. EDT

MR. FITZWATER: Ladies and gentlemen, we have with us this morning to brief you, the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Admiral Richard Truly. Admiral Truly will have a brief opening statement and then take your questions.

Admiral Truly.

ADMIRAL TRULY: Thank you and good morning.

Q Got a sign-up list? (Laughter.)

ADMIRAL TRULY: July 20, 1989 is a very important day, because it's 20 years after this nation first landed men on the Moon, and the President and the Vice President were kind enough to help NASA and the crew of Apollo 11 celebrate that on the steps of the Air and Space Museum, just a few moments ago. It -- 1989, I think finds NASA and our space program in a healthy state. We are flying again. As a matter of fact, we're going to be flying another shuttle flight here within the next few weeks. Flight readiness review is early next week and then we'll set a launch date, which will be early in August.

We're fighting hard on -- up on in the Congress for Space Station Freedom. And as I have looked across the Agency, I think that I find NASA and the American civil space program to be poised and ready to move out into the future. And I believe that President Bush very clearly this morning, and again, asserted that he believes that America should have an aggressive space program, and that we should both look back here to our own Planet Earth, where there are many environmental problems and many, I believe, that cannot be solved without a data collections program that we've called a "Mission to Planet Earth" to understand what's going on here on our Earth.

But he also directed that we also look to the future. He said that he had asked the Vice President, as head of the National Space Council, to work with NASA to present a specific plan as soon as we could; to follow his broad direction, which was to have a long and steady goal of human exploration, as we did earlier. One that would be a long commitment, that would lead, in his words I believe, to the potential return to the Moon with a science outpost, possibly -- or go there to stay in the first decade of the next century, and then eventually later, a human exploration to Mars.

Q Do you have a date on that?

ADMIRAL TRULY: No, we don't.

Q Any way of knowing?

ADMIRAL TRULY: No, we don't, because we -- I just,

frankly, learned this morning what his direction was. He laid it out in three steps. For the 1990's, he very clearly said that Space Station Freedom is our first priority, which it is today. And incidentally, the space station stands on the route to any exploration direction. And then the second step was a lunar -- a scientific outpost -- its purpose not to go -- just touch the Moon and return, but to do science there.

Q Do you say that's the first decade of the next century?

ADMIRAL TRULY: That's what the President said, yes. The first decade of the next century.

Q Admiral Truly, don't you and the administration already have a blueprint in place, deriving from the report of the National Commission on Space in 1985? Why does the National Space Council and this administration need to go back and revisit this, when you already have this blueprint for the Moon and Mars and beyond?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Well, as a matter of fact, that's really not so. We do have a number of studies in our hip pocket that have been done by independent commissions. And each of them are generally in the same -- have been in the same direction, as you say. And that is to lay out an exploration goal that would include the Moon and would include Mars, particularly in the next century. The space policy that was first -- in which it was first stated, was early in 1988, however, where it said that it was a national policy to expand our presence into the solar system. But until this morning, we really have not had a president who laid out in broad terms, his view and his series of goals so that the Space Council and NASA can flesh them out.

Q Admiral Truly, can you tell us how the sort of hard realities of what our resources are, given the fight you're having now over Space Station Freedom, how can you give any credibility to this kind of a goal, when you are up on the Hill now just trying to sustain the relatively modest levels? You know, the Apollo Project produced a doubling in the size of NASA after Kennedy announced it in the budget. I don't see any indications that the President has that in mind for his presidency, do you?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Well, first of all, there's never a time that we're not fighting for our budgets. We did it last year and the year before, and we'll be doing it next year. It is an irony that we are -- at the time that we find this sort of leadership and vision for America's future -- that at the same time this very day up on the Hill, we are, in fact, fighting very hard for the very life of Space Station Freedom, and other things in the civil space program. But the Apollo program peaked at over four percent of the federal budget. That was about what it cost at the peak to go to Apollo. But there was -- as magnificent a goal as that was, there was something about Apollo that allowed us to walk away from it and, in fact, then the funding for the civil space program plunged to less than one percent.

The program outlined today, we will -- it will be more than it is today, naturally, but, frankly, the -- as the President said in his speech, each time we have explored, each time we have invested in our future, we have always lived to thank that day. And he laid out not a program to be done in this Congress this summer, even though that's the -- the major start was Space Station Freedom -- and not a two-year goal and not a 10-year goal, but a sustained vision of the future. And I applaud him.

Q Admiral Truly, when President Kennedy called on the nation to go to the moon, he warned that it would not be easy and it would not be cheap. And he said that it would require a commitment to considerable additional funds and if there was no such commitment, the decision should be made then and there. President Bush made no comments about the specific nature of funding that would be required, though there are some estimates that it could cost $100 billion to

establish a base on the Moon. What are the ballpark figures, and why wasn't there a call for continued national sacrifice from the President today?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Well, I -- as I listened to the speech, I thought it was clear that he made a call, a very direct call to the Congress about Space Station Freedom. I believe that he clearly said that our nation, which has the strongest economy in the world, is capable of a sacrifice to explore and continue to explore along the lines that he talked about. Surely, it is clear that we should not -- and it was said, I think, very eloquently -- I think by Mike Collins this morning -- surely, it is clear that we shouldn't base the future exploration on poverty on our own country. Surely, we should turn to our own Earth. And we have major -- we do have major problems.

But we also are a country of free will. We have a very large economy. And over a long period of time, we may choose -- we have the free will to choose the directions that we go. And I don't know what the budgets will turn out to be, but I can assure you that they are very affordable, I believe, in the total context and over a long period of time, and secondly, they will be considerably less than the Apollo peak.

Q Well, is the $100-billion figure an accurate figure? What do your own hip-pocket studies show?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Well, I've read in the media an estimate that a program such as this, a crash program -- which, incidentally, he did not call for -- would cost about $100 billion over a period of 10 years or so to return to the Moon. We don't have any detailed NASA figures. We have, obviously, in the last several weeks, have looked in gross terms what it would cost, but there was no specific timetable and I have not presented the President with a specific and detailed list of budgetary requirements.

Q Admiral Truly, more and more, the space program is being characterized as a matter of great scientific interest and, in that context, somewhat of a luxury. What about the national security implications of expanding the space program, and in that context, where do we stand vis a vis the Soviet space program?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Well, that's two or three questions in one. I think -- in reverse order, I think where we stand with the Soviets is we have a very different program than theirs -- and, incidentally, I'm a great admirer of the Soviet's program in that they have had a great dedication and tenacity to follow through in a consistent program. However, I believe that no space program on Earth today has the kind of technology and capability that ours does.

Obviously, there are national security priorities in space also, but that generally is not -- the civil space program -- that's not the NASA business and it's certainly not the goals of what President Bush outlined today.

Q Do you think that this is important enough that we should raise taxes to pay for it?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Well, that's an issue that should be left to the President and to the entire -- and to a view of the entire national economic scene. And I can assure you that I'm not an expert in it. I can -- let me tell you, though, that the value of the space program -- one of the reasons that I feel so strongly about it and that I've given my life to working on it is that we -- that no one's asked about today -- that makes it very worthwhile is that it stands and has the leverage for the very things the President stands for -- education, competitiveness, the things it can do for America -- a boost to technology. We have study after study that shows that the dollars that we spend on the space program, which are spent not in space but on Earth, pay us back seven or eight dollars to one over a period of a decade or so. And you can say I'm wrong by a factor of two; it's still quite an investment in the future.

And so a program like this excites me because it will position our country as we enter the next 1,000 years in a very -- a much better competitive posture.

Q Well, would you like to see the President go the American people and say, we can't afford it with the budget we have and I'd like to ask you to pay more in taxes so we can afford it?

ADMIRAL TRULY: I can't imagine for me to be happier for the President to go to the American people and say what he said this morning.

Q He basically said we don't have the money for it, so I'm not going to ask for it now.

ADMIRAL TRULY: No, I believe he told the Vice President and the Space Council to lay out a specific plan along these broad goals, and we'll do that.

Q Has he given any deadline to Vice President Quayle for making a report? And you mentioned the other day that if the President today gave a commitment to some future program like the Moon or Mars, that NASA's as it's structured today wouldn't be able to do it. What will it take to rebuild NASA to carry out a program like this?

ADMIRAL TRULY: First of all, to my knowledge, he has not set a specific date. Frankly, it's a very hard analysis that needs to be done in order to lay it out. And you're right, I did say that the other day. Today's NASA, even though we have the underpinnings and the strength to build, to be able to do such a program, we can't do it today. We have faced a string of years in which our budgets have been tight. We have a full plate today with flying our space shuttle missions and building Space Station Freedom. And to take on a project like this, I've made -- or tried to make very clear that we will need some help. We'll need additional engineers and scientists and techs to do the program. We have some facilities problems that will need to be corrected.

However, on the other hand, let me not leave you with the wrong impression. In the last several weeks when I have looked at NASA, even though we do have these problems, I have found, frankly, that NASA has been doing the right things. For example, if any president laid out a view of the future like President Bush did this morning and we didn't have a vehicle like the space shuttle, we would have to invent one. If we didn't have a station like Space Station Freedom, we would have to invent one. If we didn't have the kind of facilities and launch pads based on Apollo that we have, we would have to do that. And we have those things, so I think we're poised and in good shape.

Q Admiral Truly, one of the things in all this talk about how Kennedy inspired the nation in 1961 -- that was only three years after Sputnik and not long after Gagarin-- and there was a great deal of fear about the Soviets gaining a superiority in space. Now with the new political relationship with the Soviets, do you think this is hurting your cause? Do you think a good Soviet communist scare might get you more money? (Laughter.)

ADMIRAL TRULY: No, it might help us in the short term, but I think it would be awful. I love what I see going on in the world today when we -- compared to 1961. And frankly, I believe, at least for this short period of time, and I hope it's a long time, the nations of the Earth, and particularly the Soviet Union and the United States, are living more equitably together. I'm interested to see what reaction internationally from this will be. I hope it's positive; I think it will be, and I'll bet it will be from them as well.

Q Why did you say that we could walk away from Apollo at some point and that we did walk away? Was it because we became so

blase?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Well, I've thought a lot about that. My theory is -- the Richard H. Truly theory -- is that it was caused by two things. One is the goal that President Kennedy set, which was a magnificent goal, but the goal was to send man to the Moon in this decade and bring him safely -- and return him safely to the Earth. And when Neil and Buzz and Mike returned safely to the Earth, even though there were a number of missions to follow them, there was -- I think there was a collective "whew, we did it" and we were so proud, and the goal had been achieved.

The second thing was the Vietnam War -- 1969, if you remember -- and I know you have studied more than me -- the Apollo landing on the Moon was one of the few great things that happened in 1969. And the things that were going on with the war and a number of areas, combined with the achievement of Apollo, allowed us, for whatever reason, to turn away.

I don't think that's what the future in the civil space program ought to be. I think we ought to have a long-range goal, not one that on a certain year at a certain date we're done with it. I think there's so much value to our American life from the space program that having a goal that is sustainable is one worth waiting for. And, by golly, we have waited 20 years for the opportunity to really set such a goal and I'm glad we --

MR. FITZWATER: Let's take a couple of final questions.

Q Admiral, the way I figure it, you want to get back to the Moon in about 20 years or so. And if you've got to do that, you've going to need a plan and you're going to need some specifics rather sooner than that. I just wondered what the timetable is to come up with a specific plan, its cost, the way its to be financed, as well as -- and a timetable. At what point in the Bush presidency would you like to see this?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Oh, I think that -- as a matter of fact, somebody just yesterday said they were worried about what the President was going to say on Thursday, and I said, don't worry about what the President's going to say on Thursday, you'd better worry about what you're going to be doing on Friday.

We have a lot of work to do. I think it's going to take a number of months for us in NASA just to lay out how this affects what we're doing and what our plans are.

The President -- I think his words, for getting back to him, were as soon as possible. As I said earlier, I'm not aware of a specific deadline, but we have our work cut out for us. But I do look forward to it. But we've got a lot to do.

Q Could you tell us as simply as possible what man will be able to do on Mars in the second decade of the 21st century -- robotics -- something we can do?

ADMIRAL TRULY: We certainly would precede a manned mission to Mars with robotic precursors. As a matter of fact, we have - one of the first of those precursors is already on the books, and it's going to be launched in 1992 -- called Mars Observer. We'll probably need to send higher fidelity imaging systems and very possibly a robotic sample return mission -- in other words, bring back a little piece of Martian soil to -- but Mars has intrigued the people of this world for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. The first excitement about going to Mars will simply be one of exploration. And that is to send men and women there to go to the planet and gain knowledge from it.

I think probably in the longer run that we will have such a program on Mars as the President mentioned today about the Moon. THe Moon is much easier for us to do and that is, a science outpost, not unlike our outposts that are in Antarctica, which, as you know,

are international outposts, and in a way, several international outposts add up to make an international base.

Q You say, man is a symbol of the exploration, then, rather than a necessity for science.

ADMIRAL TRULY: This is a -- no, I didn't say man didn't do science, but I did say that the driving urge, I think, over the centuries to the Red Planet, the Planet Mars, has been one of exploration. And it will lead later, as in all explorations, to a later program of using the planet for science and knowledge.

Q When you were briefing the Congress with Vice President Quayle, you outlined an option to the Moon by around 2001 or 2002, and Mars by 2016. The President today talked about just a space station in the '90s and the Moon in the first decade. I mean, it seems like even now, he's sort of taking a more leisurely path. Was there a change?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Well, the first decade of the next century starts in the year 2000. The last year of the first decade is the year 2010. The President is quite aware that the information and studies we've been looking at over the last several weeks has been done in a very short amount of time. I think it would be, frankly, foolish and I would never have recommended that he, based on our knowledge of what it takes, to say on a specific date.

However, our early studies show that, if you ask the question, when could we be back on the Moon, it would be in the dawn of the next century.

Q Admiral Truly, can we afford to go it alone? Won't it take joint missions, including the Soviets, to accomplish these goals?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Yes, I think we can afford to go it alone, although I think that's probably in the long run not what's going to happen.

The world has changed since the 1960s in space. It used to be only the Soviet Union and the United States that could fly in space; that's the way it was when President Kennedy made his speech. The world has changed. The Europeans, the Japanese, the Canadians, the Chinese, the Soviet Union -- all of these countries here in this brief 20 years now have the capability to fly in space.

Space Station Freedom is an international project. It's premature in this particular direction to know where we're heading, but I would think it would have an international flavor.

Q Sir, did you attend the Naval Academy?

ADMIRAL TRULY: No, ma'am, I didn't.

Q Can you tell about your educational background?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Yes. I went to Georgia Tech on a Navy ROTC scholarship, and since that day until the first day of this month, I've been on active duty in the Navy.

Q Are there any Martians? (Laughter.)

ADMIRAL TRULY: No.

Q And will they brief? (Laughter.)

ADMIRAL TRULY: One more, please.

Q Admiral, your predecessor always said if Congress is going to cut the money for Space Station Freedom, it might as well be killed altogether. Are you willing to -- if the money is cut for Space Station Freedom, are you willing to cut back on the concept of

a space station to a smaller space station, perhaps?

ADMIRAL TRULY: Well, we've asked for, I think this year's requirement for the space station that we need in the President's budget is a little over $2 billion -- $2.05 billion. If we got one dollar less, I guess I would -- you know, there's -- certainly, I think we can build that one.

We're being threatened very directly with a cut as large as $400 million. There have been amendments bouncing back and forth up on the Hill that would kill the space station. So there is a point where we can't build the space station that we have talked about before, but I don't want to scale it back. We know the space station we want to build. It's named "Freedom." We're entering a preliminary design review. That's the space station the country ought to build. Certainly, there is a level in cuts that -- we wouldn't cancel it, but I would have to direct my people to look at changes -- and I've already done that.

But I've tried over and over again to make it clear that I'm only doing it because I think it would be lousy program management if I didn't take account of the realities when I'm being threatened directly with a cut of almost half-a-billion dollars early in the program. And I think the President's strong support today that that is the first thing to do, as we chart a new course, was one that I hope helps me and you and NASA and the civil space program on the Hill.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END 11:50 A.M. EDT