

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

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EXCERPTS FROM PREPARED REMARKS BY THE VICE PRESIDENT

VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, CALIFORNIA

Vandenberg Air Force Base has truly played a vital role in keeping America free. The strategic missiles tested here -- and the men and women trained here -- have helped provide our umbrella of security for more than three decades. Throughout times of uncertainty and Cold War, Vandenberg has always done its part to guard our country and preserve the peace. And I am here to say thank you.

During the Persian Gulf War, too, Vandenberg did its part. Space systems, including many launched from this base, provided us a global vision, and a level of tactical support to commanders in the field that was simply unprecedented.

In the years ahead, as we defend ourselves and our friends, the Air Force Space Policy Directive will be proven true: "Spacepower will be as decisive in future combat as airpower is today."

The men and women of Vandenberg will continue to lead -- in the military, and in our overall space program. And let there be no mistake: America's space program must and will always be the very best in the world.

In every aspect of our space program we will, in the words of Longfellow, "wisely improve the present," and "meet the future without fear." But there's more: Americans don't just meet the future; we shape it. We can't predict every challenge facing us 10, 30, 50 years down the road. But we can equip ourselves and our children to deal with those challenges: By providing the infrastructure that's needed to build and to prosper. In the 20th century, our pathways to progress and development have been the momentous highway and dam projects. In the 21st century, our next great pathway will be space transportation.

And consider where that pathway could take us. Consider the benefits it may bring us.

- o Research and manufacturing in space can help us cure dreaded diseases and extend life.

- o Space travel can bring about whole new industries -- in areas like communications, electronics, and energy -- improving our standards of living, generating jobs, and making us more competitive.
- o It can also open new avenues of cooperation with other countries -- including the Soviet Union -- allowing us to work together on environmental monitoring and life sciences research.

And let's not forget another reason for our space program. We are a pioneering nation. You can trace our entire history through the stories of those who led lives of exploration and discovery. From Lewis and Clark to the riders on the westward trails; from Thomas Edison to Henry Ford; from the Wright brothers to the astronauts. It is our destiny to push back the frontiers of geography and knowledge. Americans will always be the world's great pioneers.

To continue to lead, to create the infrastructure that's needed, we have to go beyond where we are today. Let's face it: America's launch capabilities are aging. You know this well. The Shuttle, for all its marvelous capability, was designed in the early 1970's. The expendable rockets are based on even older technologies.

It's not that we can't get critical missions into space; we can, and we have, four times since March here at Vandenberg. But we can do more. It is time for a new phase in space launch.

I am here to announce that as of today, we have entered that new phase. President Bush has approved a new National Space Launch Strategy -- a long-range plan to meet America's launch needs well into the next Century. This blueprint for change will bring our space launch capabilities into line with the enormous technological advances of the past two decades. And it will open the highway to space for what the President has termed the "Next American Century."

How do we get there? We'll begin by developing a new national launch system -- a new family of launch vehicles -- within a decade -- to take advantage of current technologies that are less costly and more reliable. We'll also pursue an energetic space launch technology program to prepare for needs that arise down the road. This effort, involving NASA and the Departments of Energy and Defense, will include both system components and new launch system concepts -- like the National Aerospace Plane -- that could bring breathtaking improvements in the years ahead.

The new National Launch Strategy is not a "buy everything" plan. It's one that will meet real needs, both for NASA and the

Department of Defense. And it's one that will lead to a new commercial launch vehicle as good or better than those of our foreign competitors.

We also have to remember that in the next several years, decisions must be made on the design of a whole new generation of satellites. If we don't move forward with a new system now, these missions will have to be designed for launch on vehicles we already have. If we were to let this happen, America would be locked into continued reliance on our current vehicles, and their 20 to 30 year old technology, for another generation. This is unacceptable.

Of course, investing in a system for the future doesn't mean neglecting the needs of today. Systems like Atlas, Delta, Titan and the Space Shuttle will certainly provide America's primary launch capabilities at least through this decade and into the 21st Century.

In the development of our new strategy, perhaps the most difficult set of decisions concerned the Space Shuttle program. Less than a decade ago, our space policy envisioned total reliance on the Shuttle. But circumstances have changed dramatically since then. Today we rely on expendable rockets for nearly all of our unmanned launch requirements, and that's a sound policy. The Space Shuttle, with its precious human lives, is just too valuable to use on missions that don't need its unique capabilities. It makes no sense to use Shuttle astronauts unless we absolutely have to. In the future we should, and we will, seek to avoid using the Shuttle solely as a cargo carrier.

As far as manned spaceflight is concerned, the Shuttle will be crucial for some time to come. The space launch policy proposes to extend the life span of the Shuttle fleet; to maintain the capacity to produce spare parts; and to operate the system conservatively. But the policy does not envision acquiring new orbiters. Therefore, in all probability, we have purchased the last Space Shuttle.

The new phase in space launch will also bring an increase in the importance of commercial launch. New commercial uses of space will evolve, international competition in space launch will increase, and the relationship between federal government agencies and industry will become more like a partnership.

Last week's launch of Pegasus here, at the western test range, is a good example of how government and industry can work together on America's launch infrastructure. That's something we want to strengthen, and doing so is part of the new strategy. Just as we build roads to suit commercial traffic, we'll build a launch system that can fit the needs of the private sector. The

result will be a better launch industry in America -- and a better competitive standing around the world.

More than thirty years ago, our country's leaders made a solemn decision: that America's space program would always lead the world. For the National Space Council, and for our entire space apparatus, yesterday's pledge is today's mission. And our new National Launch Strategy will help ensure that we accomplish our mission.

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