

Obama lays out new US space policy

June 28 2010



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President Barack Obama on Monday laid out an overarching new US policy on outer space, calling for more international and private sector cooperation on exploration, climate change and orbiting debris.

The release of the new policy did not contain new, specific announcements, but served as a blueprint for government departments and foreign governments on US goals and philosophy on [space](#) exploration and exploitation.

"Our policy reflects the ways in which our imperatives and our obligations in space have changed in recent decades," Obama said in a statement.

"No longer are we racing against an adversary --- in fact, one of our central goals is to promote peaceful cooperation and collaboration in space."

Obama was in April forced to insist that he was "100 percent" committed to NASA, after unveiling plans to scrap an over-budget Moon launch mission, and concentrate on sending US astronauts into Mars orbit within three decades.

The document issued Monday, while not limited to NASA, restated the goal of advancing a "bold new approach" to [space exploration](#) and human and [robotic exploration](#) of the solar system.

It restated the administration's strategy of seeking partnerships with commercial spaceflight organizations to transport crew and cargo to and from the [International Space Station](#), and to begin manned flights to "new destinations" by 2025.

"We set ambitious goals for NASA: ramping up robotic and human space exploration, with our sights set on Mars and beyond, to improve the capacity of human beings to learn and work safely beyond the Earth for extended periods of time," Obama said.

With the US budget deficit clouding government spending, Obama committed to seeking cooperation "to the greatest extent practicable" in space science and exploration, [Earth observation](#), and climate change research.

The United States will also seek partners in space to improve environmental data, disaster mitigation and surveillance of space for debris monitoring.

The new policy also states continued US commitment to use space

systems to support national security to enhance Washington's capacity to identify threats and defeat any attempt by enemies to attack US or allied space systems.

NASA administrator Charles Bolden said the new policy embraced NASA's historical role of researching and developing launch systems but challenged the agency to embrace new roles.

He also described the new policy as including a "job-creating" transportation system for manned low-Earth orbit.

Some critics of Obama's plans to rule out the over-budget Constellation Moon launch system have cited the impact on employment of the decision in space industry in Florida and Texas.

In a nod to those critics, Obama had previously announced that he would retain and scale down a portion of the Constellation project, the Orion capsule.

The White House says it will boost NASA's budget by six billion dollars over five years and will create 2,500 jobs in Florida by 2012.

Once the current shuttle program ends early next year, the United States will rely on Russia's Soyuz rockets to carry astronauts to the space station until a commercial US launcher can be developed. That is scheduled for 2015.

Obama's policy document did not mention specific nations that might be involved in cooperating with the US space program.

But French Higher Education Minister Valerie Pecresse said after a visit to the [United States](#) last week that France had listened to the administration's plans for space cooperation with "great interest" and

formed a joint working group with Washington on the issue.

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Citation: Obama lays out new US space policy (2010, June 28) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-06-obama-space-policy.html>

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