

NASA chief visits China manned space launch site

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(AP) -- The head of NASA visited China's manned space flight launch center during a trip to the country to explore possibilities for cooperation, the U.S. agency said Tuesday.

China launched its first manned space flight in 2003 and plans an unmanned moon landing in 2012, with a possible manned [lunar mission](#) to follow in 2017 - marking new milestones in its [space program](#) while those in the U.S. and elsewhere face tightened budgets.

[NASA](#) Administrator Charles Bolden Jr. said he had a "very comprehensive" visit to facilities run by the manned space flight program, including the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in China's northwest, according to a NASA statement.

Bolden left Thursday after a six-day visit. China has not commented on the visit and it wasn't clear why Bolden's statement was not released until Tuesday.

The visit succeeded in boosting understanding between the sides about their programs and the "importance of transparency, reciprocity and mutual benefit as the underlying principles of any future interaction between our two nations in the area of human spaceflight," Bolden was quoted as saying.

No specific proposals were discussed during the visit, he said.

Russia, the United States and China are the only countries to have put humans into orbit, though other nations have been represented on the [international space station](#).

The close links of China's space program with its military have so far limited cooperation with other nations.

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