

New NASA boss: Astronauts on Mars in his lifetime

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(AP) -- NASA's new boss says he will be "incredibly disappointed" if people aren't on Mars - or even beyond it - in his lifetime.

NASA Administrator Charles Bolden Jr., who's 62, told The Associated Press that his ultimate goal isn't just [Mars](#) - it's anywhere far from Earth.

"I did grow up watching Buck Rogers and Buck Rogers didn't stop at Mars," Bolden said in one of his first interviews since taking office last Friday. "In my lifetime, I will be incredibly disappointed if we have not at least reached Mars."

That appears to be a shift from the space policy set in motion by President George W. Bush, who proposed first returning to the [moon](#) by 2020 and then eventually going to Mars a decade or two later. Bolden didn't rule out using the moon as a stepping stone to Mars and beyond, but he talked more about Mars than the moon.

Bolden said NASA and other federal officials had too many conflicting views on how to get to Mars, including the existing Constellation project begun under Bush. That project calls for returning to the moon first, with a moon rocket design that Bolden's predecessor called "Apollo on steroids."

A new independent commission is reviewing that plan and alternatives to it. Bolden said his main job over the next few months will be to champion an "agreed-upon compromise strategy to get first to Mars and

then beyond. And we don't have that yet."

Bolden, a former astronaut, also vowed to extend the life of the [international space station](#) beyond 2016, the year the Bush administration planned to abandon it.

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