

NASA chief charts agency's shuttle-less future

8 April 2010, By SETH BORENSTEIN , AP Science Writer



In this July 20, 1969 black-and-white file photo, taken from a television monitor, Apollo 11 astronaut Neil Armstrong, right, trudging across the surface of the moon. Edwin E. Aldrin is seen closer to the craft. NASA may not be going to the moon anytime soon and its space shuttles are about to be retired, but it could conceivably increase the number of agency jobs under a new reorganization, NASA's chief said Thursday. (AP Photo, File)

(AP) -- NASA may not be going to the moon anytime soon and its space shuttles are about to be retired, but it could conceivably increase the number of agency jobs under a new reorganization, NASA's chief said Thursday.

NASA Administrator Charles Bolden said that because NASA has more money overall, it should have more jobs compared to the previous administration's plans for a [moon mission](#). But more of those jobs will be on research into airplanes and climate change. NASA also plans to spend billions of dollars more over the next five years on developing new rocket technology and helping private firms build their own ships to take people to the [international space station](#).

"You have more money and that would say you

have more jobs," Bolden said during a telephone press conference. But he said the agency has not come up with any real figures on employment and that the more-jobs claim is just based on correlation with spending.

Thursday's press conference outlined how NASA would change under a new space plan that President Barack Obama unveiled in February with his 2011 budget.

That space plan kills a return-to-the-moon mission, dubbed "Apollo on steroids" that his predecessor proposed in 2004. To pay for that moon mission, then-President George W. Bush announced the retirement of the space shuttles by the end of 2010.

Space shuttles will still be mothballed within months. Instead of spending tens of billions of dollars on the moon mission, the Obama administration plans to divert the money to researching new rocket technology for general exploration, fostering commercial space industry, climate change science, and aeronautics. The ultimate exploration goal is Mars, Bolden said.

"We're expanding the amount of programs we have so we can try to put people to do work who want to be involved in the space program," Bolden said.

That will be a big issue next week when President Obama goes to Kennedy Space Center in Florida, where people are concerned about losing their current jobs, to try to sell his space plan.

Bolden said in NASA's reorganization some areas that concentrate on the [space shuttle](#) will lose contractor jobs because the shuttle fleet is being retired this year.

Under the reorganization, Kennedy Space Center will be in charge of the new \$6 billion program to encourage private companies to fly astronauts. The launch complex will get a \$2.3 billion overhaul.

Marshall Space Center in Huntsville, Ala., also figures to be hurt by the shuttle retirement, but it will be put in charge of trying to come up with a new heavy lift spaceship to take giant parts beyond Earth's orbit. Johnson Space Center in Texas will be in charge of a new \$6 billion technology development program.

All those plans are subject to approval by Congress.

More information: NASA's workforce plans:
<http://www.nasa.gov/news/budget/index.html>

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