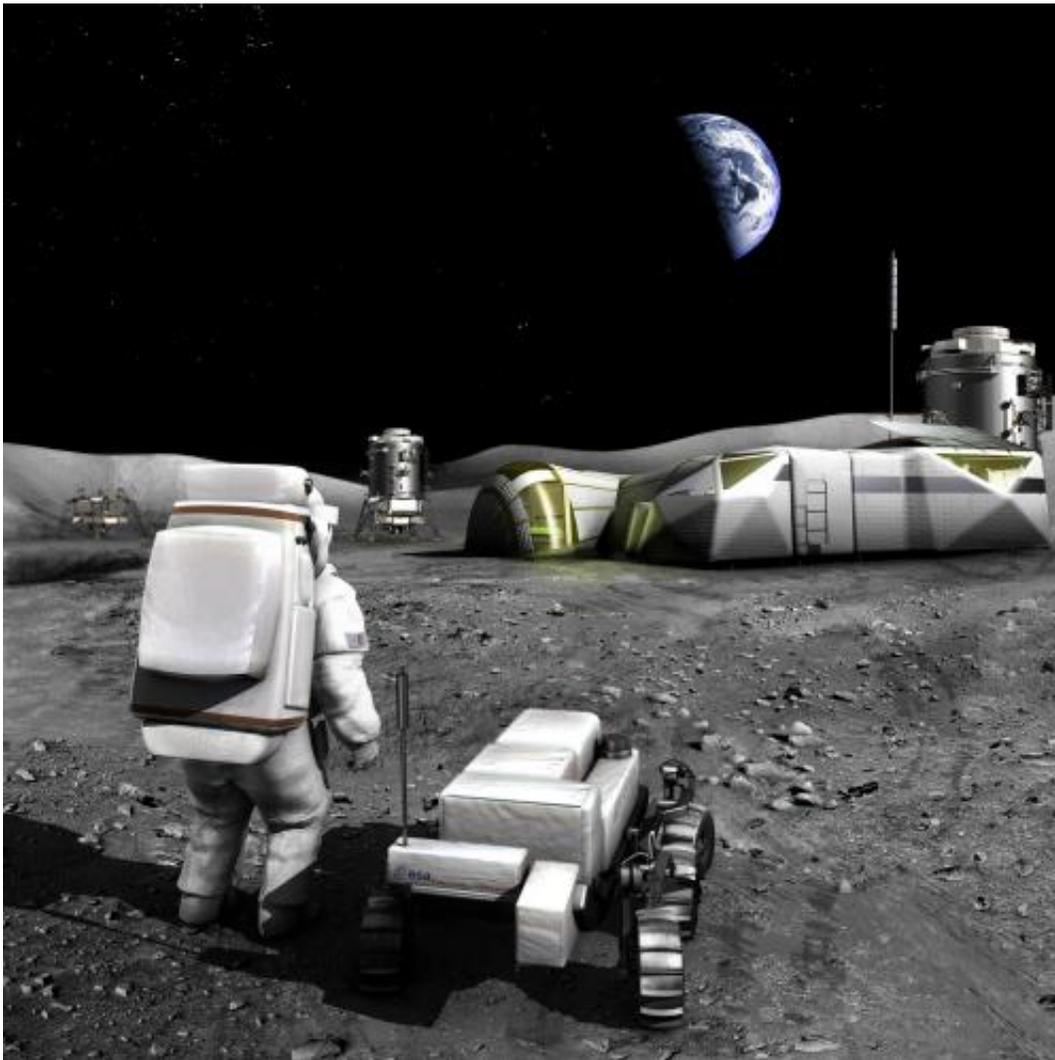


New report indicates private industry interested in building moon base

May 27 2013, by Bob Yirka



Vision of an international research base on the Moon. Credit: ESA

(Phys.org) —Two months ago NASA commissioned Bigelow Aerospace to conduct a survey of the corporate sector to learn about private enterprise plans for space exploration. While the report has not yet been completed, Bigelow president Robert Bigelow and NASA's head of space operations William Gerstenmaier held a teleconference with reporter's to discuss findings thus far.

Bigelow told those on the line that he and his company have surveyed approximately 20 of the biggest names in aerospace, including some foreign entities. He says the major area of interest for aerospace companies right now is in establishing a permanent presence on the moon. Gerstenmaier responded by suggesting NASA would welcome such a development as it would work well with the agency's future plans.

NASA plans to lasso an asteroid sometime early on in the next decade and drag it into orbit around the moon. Following that, the plan is to send [manned missions](#) to the captured asteroid—initially to learn more about its makeup—then later to work with private businesses in developing mining operations. That would be a lot easier of course if private companies had already built a [lunar base](#) from which to operate.

Bigelow reported that private businesses have expressed interest in space exploration for a variety of reasons, ranging from [pharmaceutical development](#) via an Earth orbiting facility to lunar based projects based mostly on mining operations. The moon is considered important both for its [material composition](#) and as a jumping off point for other ventures. NASA, for example, has indicated in the past that it envisions sending spacecraft on deep [space missions](#) using the moon as a construction base and departure point. Its [low gravity](#) makes getting into a space a lot easier.

The initial draft of the report created by Bigelow is to be delivered to NASA in the next few weeks. A second report, due in the fall is to more

specifically detail private sector plans for space exploration. Gerstenmaier pointed out on the call that his agency is taking a different approach than usual with its request to Bigelow. Normal protocol calls for the agency to develop its internal strategy then reach out to the private sector for help in achieving its goals. This time around, NASA is looking to see what the private sector is up to, and then will make decisions about its own plans based on what is found.

More information: www.bigelow aerospace.com/

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