

Get New York Post Mobile 



NYC Weather
80° SUNNY

NEW YORK POST

24 HOURS A DAY

- [home](#)
- [news](#)
- [sports](#)
- [gossip](#)
- [business](#)
- [entertainment](#)
- [opinion](#)
- [tv](#)
- [video](#)
- [photos](#)
- [blogs](#)
 - [Sports Blogs](#)
 - [PopWrap](#)
 - [Fashion: HiLo](#)
 - [Movies](#)
 - [Travel](#)
 - [Real Estate](#)
 - [TV](#)
 - [Wine](#)
 - [Video Games](#)
 - [Tempo](#)
- [classifieds](#)

- [Opinion Home](#)
- [Editorials](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Letters](#)
- [Blog: 2nd Opinion](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Cartoon](#)
- [Send A Letter](#)



ORION AND ARES -- THE FUTURE OF NASA

A SHUTTLE ASTRONAUT ON WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

RELATED STORIES

- [WE NEED A MODERN APOLLO PROGRAM](#)
- [LOST IN SPACE](#)
- [HUBBLE GETS NEW GYROSCOPES, BATTERIES IN 2ND SPACEWALK](#)

[more stories](#)

RELATED TOPICS

- [NASA](#)
- [GEORGE W. BUSH](#)
- [BARACK OBAMA](#)

[more topics](#)

SHARE



Comments: 2

[Read Comments](#)

[Leave a Comment](#)

By **TOM JONES**

Last updated: 4:08 pm
 May 17, 2009
 Posted: 4:16 am
 May 17, 2009

My astronaut colleagues on shuttle Atlantis have completed three of their planned spacewalks to repair and upgrade NASA's Hubble Space Telescope. Their exacting, sky-high brain surgery on Hubble shows how far human explorers and their robot assistants have come since humanity's first lunar landing, Apollo 11, forty years ago this July.

PHOTOS: Let There Be Light: Camera Hooked Up For Hubble

BUZZ ALDRIN: LOST IN SPACE

PHILIP PLAIT: WE NEED A MODERN APOLLO PROGRAM

That first lunar landing came from the national determination to demonstrate our superiority over the Soviet system by competing successfully in space. Hubble's triumph has been powered by a quest for scientific knowledge, enabled by the amazing capabilities of the space shuttle, its flight controllers and engineers, and its expert crews. The Apollo 11 and Hubble successes are figurative bookends in a library holding four decades of scientific and technological lessons, won through intelligent risk-taking, a consensus for national leadership in space, and the wisdom to learn from tragic mistakes.

But now the technological momentum built by Apollo, and sustained for forty years by the shuttle and space station programs, is nearly exhausted. After the Columbia shuttle accident, President Bush proposed vigorous new goals in space: complete the International Space Station, safely retire the shuttle by 2010, and build a new spaceship to return American astronauts to the moon and deep space. Unfortunately, those objectives, although endorsed repeatedly by Congress, were never funded adequately.

 [Click for photo gallery](#)



The Hubble Space Telescope

Sponsored Links

"Single Mom Lost 47 lbs"

I cut down 12 lbs of fat in just 1 month by following 1 Easy Diet Rule.
HelensDiet.com/Secret

Mortgage Rates at 4.50%

\$200,000 loan for \$771/month. See New Payment - No SSN Rqd. Save Now!
Refinance.LeadSteps.com

Scottrade: Online Stocks

\$7 Online Trades. Unlimited Shares. Open Your Account Online Today!
www.Scottrade.com

Buy a link here

TODAY'S HOT TOPICS

- [THE REAL HOUSEWIVES OF NEW YORK CITY](#)
 - [JOHN GOTTI](#)
 - [MARK SANCHEZ](#)
- [more topics](#)

THIS WEEK'S HOT TOPICS

- [ALANA STEWART](#)
 - [VICTORIA GOTTI](#)
 - [ADAM LAMBERT](#)
- [more topics](#)

SEARCH FOR FLIGHTS

From:

To:

Depart:

Return:

[Go](#)

continental.com



Now y secur

Sign up preclear

[Find ou](#)

The shuttle's successor, Orion, won't fly until at least 2015. Some critics have called for NASA to scrap Orion's new booster and go back to the drawing board. More worrisome, President Obama has left NASA leaderless since his inauguration, and proposes over the next four years to cut \$3.1 billion from the Constellation program designed to develop Orion and its new Ares I booster. It's hard to see how either approach will reduce the four-year "gap" between 2011 and 2015, when America will have no human launch capability, forcing our astronauts to ride Russian rockets to the space station.

The President has asked former **Lockheed Martin** CEO Norman Augustine to lead an assessment of NASA's post-shuttle human spaceflight plans. Augustine said last week that his panel will also evaluate alternatives to the much-debated Ares I rocket booster. But Ares I has been in development for five years, with a first unmanned test flight scheduled for this fall. With adequate funding, I'm sure it can get Orion to orbit.

A review of NASA's management and program execution is prudent, but also invites further delay in getting Orion flying. Building our first new manned spaceship in thirty-five years will be difficult, but NASA's people are up to the challenge, just as they are proving with Hubble. If given the resources, I know they will launch Orion, and make it both safer and cheaper to operate than the shuttle. Its Ares boosters will be able to send its crews to the moon and beyond, to nearby asteroids.

Once satisfied that our trajectory in space is correct, the President should dedicate the funds to meet those goals. In spending terms, NASA's annual budget is miniscule: \$18.3 billion next year, just one half of one percent of the \$3.6 trillion federal outlay. Failing to correct NASA's chronic budget shortfalls, on the other hand, will cede U.S. leadership in space even as we celebrate Apollo's landmark achievements.

Here's how the President can ensure America will continue to lead in space: Restore funding to keep Orion and Ares on track. Make the science and technology investments that will keep the space station's laboratories humming. Send our explorers not just to the moon, but far beyond. Orion astronauts can explore nearby asteroids, where they will collect samples from the dawn of the solar system, tap valuable space resources, gain the engineering skills to guard our planet against a cosmic impact, and inspire us with views of a breathtakingly distant Earth, five million miles away.

Our nation needs a new generation of scientists and engineers. We should turn our young people loose to explore the moon, the asteroids and the solar system. This same world-beating corps of explorers will also conquer terrestrial challenges in energy, defense, environmental protection and high-tech competition.

With the President's support, space exploration will continue to be an American trademark: for science, for resources and energy, and for new industrial and economic activity. Having flown the space shuttle four times, and worked in orbit to construct the space station, I know what NASA's people can do. If we build on the legacy of Apollo 11 and the team that restored Hubble, America's pioneers will write new chapters in exploration and innovation on the space frontier. If President Obama actively supports, and then demands the best from those who have the right stuff, we'll get it.

Tom Jones is a veteran shuttle astronaut, planetary scientist, author, and speaker. His latest book, with co-author Ellen Stofan is "Planetology: Unlocking the Secrets of the Solar System." Explore further at AstronautTomJones.com