REMARKS FOR ADMINISTRATOR BOLDEN

ARMED FORCES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

VETERANS DAY BALL, HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

Nov. 10, 2011

Greetings to Dr. Rosabeth Kantor, Director of the Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative…

It's a pleasure to be here tonight. Thanks to Danny Cho for the persistence in getting me here. Veterans' Day and all it represents is very important to me. As most of you know, the majority of my career was spent as an active duty Marine. I was also fortunate to spend 14 life-changing years at NASA in the Astronaut Corps and now I have the privilege to run America's space program as the NASA Administrator. I am very fortunate to have Harvard alum, BGEN Mike Wholley, USMC (Ret), as my GC.

There have been a lot of activities the past couple of weeks around the birthday of the Marine Corps. We celebrate our 236th Anniversary today and I was privileged to attend the annual wreath laying ceremony at the Iwo Jima Memorial where SGT Dakota Myers, MOH recipient, was the guest of honor…6 times into enemy fire – three vehicles shot out from under him – as he continually went into harms way to save the lives of his fellow Marines.

I was privileged to be the guest of honor at a celebration at the State Department last week, and I was moved to meet many Marines and hear their stories about the difference they have made around the world.

I know they and all veterans will continue to make a difference, not only on the ground, but as we enter the next great chapter of exploration in space. We're going to need the gumption and ability to think on your feet that is trained into our

military personnel if we, as a people committed to a global exploration enterprise, are to reach the destinations we envision farther out in our solar system, like an asteroid, and Mars. We're going to need people like you at this celebration of Veterans' Day who are committed to public service.

Throughout its history, NASA has relied on the expertise and special character of the men and women of the armed services. From Alan Shepard, the first American to fly in space, to John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth, to the latest class of astronauts whom I congratulated last week. This long tradition will continue. It is beneficial both to NASA and the military, as we cross-pollinate each other with skills and experiences that help us both succeed in the challenging environments in which we must perform at the highest level.

I have to admit that I never thought I would fly in space. That idea came to me well into my career largely at the prodding

of the late, great Dr. Ron McNair. He was my mentor. An incredibly talented young man who faced many of the same challenges I did as we both grew up in segregated South Carolina. We both reached space by different paths – his the fulfillment of a life-long dream to become an astronaut – mine, the result of accepting a challenge to face possible rejection and apply for the Astronaut Program after I met and talked with Ron. After his first flight into space on STS-51B in 1984, ironically, Ron's path ended tragically with the STS-51L Challenger mission in January 1986 just 10 days after I landed from my first Shuttle mission. His legacy continues to inspire the next generation of explorers.

It's a long way from the segregated south to low Earth orbit. But I am fortunate to have made the journey and to have had many opportunities to serve the nation in my career with the U.S. Marine Corps and in many roles at NASA.

When I was a young man, my service as NASA's first African American Administrator under the nation's first Black president would have been nearly unthinkable. But through the efforts of many people of all races, our nation has changed. And, thanks to the Space Shuttle Program, and NASA's cross-disciplinary exploration missions, African Americans and many others have had access to space and also to science and technological careers

For my part, my parents were probably the biggest influences on my life. Not only growing up, but still, today, as I make decisions as a husband, grandfather, father, brother and leader, I feel their influence. My father was a teacher, my mother a librarian. Learning was always at the forefront of our lives as well as a commitment to public service. That led me to the military and a chance to serve my country as my father and my uncles had done in World War II, when Blacks had to fight for the right to serve in our Armed Forces. I wanted to follow in the footsteps of so many

African Americans who had already served this country with distinction, if not always with recognition.

For me, my life has been quite a ride, but I couldn't have done it without all those who came before. That's why I tell today's young people that I hope they will take the gains that previous generations have made and make their own progress. Students ask me how to become an astronaut. I tell them to pursue any of the paths in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and their chances of a secure and exciting career that makes contributions to our economy and improves life for people worldwide will be possible.

A touchstone of my personal philosophy is these words from Rev. Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, Dr. Martin Luther King's mentor during his years of study at Morehouse College. It is Dr. Mays who perhaps influenced Dr. King most, and whose words and

thoughts we frequently heard reflected in the words of Dr. King. This is from a sermon by Dr. Mays titled "What Man Lives By":

"Man must believe that however hard the road, however difficult today, tomorrow things will be better. Tomorrow may not be better, but we must believe that it will be. Wars may never cease, but we must continue to strive to eliminate them. We may not abolish poverty, but we must believe that we can provide bread enough to spare for every living creature and that we can find the means to distribute it. We may not exterminate racism, but we must believe that different racial groups can live together in peace, and we must never cease to try to build a society in which the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man become realities."

That's what leadership and service are really about. As leaders, we may be like Moses, the destination never reached. But there is much to be gained on the journey. Many lives are

touched by our actions. Our service may be that we keep moving forward, keep others moving forward with us, even when the road is hard, or keep them focused during those times when success also overwhelms us. Because success, too, poses its own challenges even in the midst of our jubilation.

I never really left Columbia, South Carolina behind. The family and teachers and friends that are still there remind me of who I am, where I come from, and what my ideals should be. It was a fortunate upbringing in many ways, despite the hardships.

I wouldn't change a thing – I'm an optimist. I believe that the future is bright for the young people just entering the workforce today.

I hope I have had some small part in the progress this nation has made. I look forward to the space program's continued success improving people's lives around the world through new

technologies and discoveries and showing that with innovation, creativity and passion, you can knock down any barrier of race, ethnicity, creed, or gender.

I know many of you students here at the university, or people you know, may have been called to serve in the military. According to my GC, Mike Wholley, mentioned earlier, behind the USNA and the USMA, the highest number of MOH recipients is from Harvard. He recommends you visit the Memorial Chapel on the Harvard Yard to view the plaque dedicated to the Harvard MOH recipients.

I'd like to take a moment here to commend and thank President Faust for her consistent, long-term support of the NROTC Mids on campus and for finally returning NROTC to the Harvard campus. It's a challenging time to be in the military right now, with so many demands around the world. But our service

members are facing those challenges with bravery, and I am very proud of all of them and all of you who have previously served.

With Veteran's Day tomorrow, I want to take a moment to commend President Obama for including in his American Jobs Act, a Returning Heroes Tax Credit of up to $5,600 for businesses that hire a veteran who has been out of work for more than six months. The tax credit rises to $9600 for hiring veterans who have service-related disabilities. Just this afternoon, the Senate voted on these veterans' benefits and passed them by a bi-partisan unanimous 95-0 vote. As the President has said, the men and women who fight our wars overseas shouldn't have to come home and fight for a job.

NASA has been a leader in hiring veterans, precisely for the reasons I mentioned earlier – they have a dedication to duty and successful mission outcomes, and have been trained to react in real time to unfolding situations.

I often speak to groups in Washington that are part of the aerospace sector. It is important to speak to those groups, as they will help implement the way forward for our space program. But it's always very special for me to be with the men and women from all the services, who have made a courageous and exciting choice to combine our technology and their expertise and passion in the defense of our country.

As NASA Administrator, one of my greatest challenges and passions is to lead our NASA team in inspiring the next generation of Americans to once again become interested in the promise of exploration and make the challenging personal and career choices that will keep America the leader in exploration.

All of this work is done in a spirit of public service. At NASA, there is a strong feeling that what we do is for the greater good of mankind. Strong words, I know, but when you see how our

exploration technologies are being spun off for medical use or to make our lives safer, or you see space station water processing technology being used to purify water in areas where there is a need, or materials developed for astronauts being used to protect our firefighters and first responders, you can see how wide-ranging the ripple effect is from our work to stretch the bounds of human experience. It comes right back down here to Earth.

So, leadership and service – they've been cornerstones of my career and the example for living that I got from my parents.

We never know what impact all the ripples of our activities will have. If I have made the world a little better for the next young soldier, sailor, airman, Coast Guardsman, or Marine by breaking down some barriers, or helped to bring about the kind of world that I want for my three beautiful granddaughters, Mikaley, Kyra, and Talia, then I will have served my purpose.

I want to salute all of our veterans once again and say "Semper Fi" to my fellow Marines. It's my honor to be here with all of you tonight. God Bless each of you, and God Bless the USA!