Remarks by Charles Bolden,
NASA Administrator
NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Florida

On the Announcement of the Awarding of the Commercial Crew Transportation Capability Contracts

September 16, 2014

Thank you, Bob, and thanks to those of you able to join us for this announcement here in person and on the call. Today's announcement sets the stage for what promises to be the most ambitious and exciting chapter in the history of NASA and human space flight.

From day one, the Obama Administration has made it clear that the greatest nation on Earth should not be dependent on other nations to get into space.

Thanks to the leadership of President Obama, the hard work of our NASA and industry teams, and support from Congress, today we are one step closer to launching our astronauts from U.S. soil on American spacecraft and ending the nation's sole reliance on Russia by 2017. Turning over low-Earth orbit transportation to private industry will also allow NASA to focus on an even more ambitious mission – sending humans to Mars.

We have already fulfilled part of the President's vision. As you all know, for the past two years, two companies, SpaceX and Orbital Sciences, have been making regular cargo deliveries to the International Space Station. The contracts we are announcing today are designed to complete the NASA certification for human space transportation systems capable of carrying people into orbit. Once certification is complete, NASA plans to use these systems to ferry astronauts to the International Space Station and return them safely to Earth.

Again, this will fulfill the commitment President Obama made to return human spaceflight launches to U.S. soil and end our reliance on the Russians.

As a former Space Shuttle commander, I know that the goal of every mission is to do something different from the flights that have gone before. Alan Shepard earned the title first American in space, John Glenn the first American to orbit Earth and with all due respect to the late Michael Jackson, Neil and Buzz were the first moonwalkers.

Today, we don't know who is going to get to command the first mission to carry humans into low-Earth orbit on a spacecraft built by an American private company, but we know it will be a seminal moment in NASA history and a major achievement for our nation. We now know, however, who will build it!

The Boeing Company (Boeing) and Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) have each presented to us designs that will allow us fly crews to the International Space Station in just a few years. Respectively, the vehicles are Boeing's *CST-100* and SpaceX's *Dragon.* The total potential contract value is $6.8 billion over the initial contract period. The spacecraft will launch from here at the KSC-Cape Canaveral launch complex.

Our specialist teams have watched the development of these new spacecraft during earlier development phases and are confident they will meet the demands of these important missions. We are also confident they will be safe for NASA astronauts – to achieve NASA certification in 2017, they must meet the same rigorous safety standards we had for the space shuttle program.

This was not an easy choice, but it is the best choice for NASA and the nation. We received numerous proposals from companies throughout the aerospace industry.

Highly qualified, American companies – united in their desire to return human spaceflight launches to U.S. soil – competed to serve this nation and end our reliance on Russia. I applaud them all for their innovation, their hard work and their patriotism.

The partnerships with Boeing and SpaceX promise to give more people in America and around the world the opportunity to experience the wonder and exhilaration of spaceflight – to realize the dream of leaving Earth for even a short time to float above our planet, Earth, in microgravity and to see the stars and the majestic tapestry of the Milky Way unobstructed by the artificial lights and dust of our atmosphere. Space travelers will also be able to imagine and realize new benefits that can be brought back to Earth.

While Boeing and SpaceX handle the tasks of taking our astronauts to the space station, the scientists on Earth and astronauts on the orbiting ISS National Laboratory will continue the groundbreaking research that has been taking place there for almost fourteen years now without interruption. They will be able to add to that portfolio with an expanded crew made possible by the arrival of this new spacecraft.

As research takes place in low-Earth orbit and the companies refine their new space transportation systems, we at NASA will be working just as diligently readying our new heavy-lift rocket, the Space Launch System (SLS), and our multi-purpose crew vehicle, *Orion*, for missions in the next decade that will carry people far from our local space neighborhood.

Just yesterday, off the coast of California, I witnessed the successful recovery test of the *Orion* engineering test article – the next generation spacecraft that is being readied for its December flight test and its eventual use for journeys to an asteroid and to Mars. With help from the U.S. Navy, *Orion* mockup was put through a full ocean recovery dress rehearsal. Following its first flight, *Orion* will splashdown in the Pacific Ocean – the first time in more than 40 years that it has been necessary to recover a human spacecraft from the ocean.

Last week right here at KSC, we rolled the Orion crew module for EFT-1 out of the Neil Armstrong O&C building to the Hypergolic Processing Facility for fueling in preparation for its maiden test flight in December.

Just two days later at NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans, we cut the ribbon on the new 170 foot high Vertical Assembly Center, the state of the art tooling facility that will weld together the massive core stage of the SLS – the rocket that will launch *Orion* and our astronauts farther into space than any human has gone before. From Michoud, I traveled to the Stennis Space Center to view progress on the historic B-2 Test Stand that is being prepared to test the core stage of SLS and its configuration of four RS-25 engines.

We will launch SLS and *Orion* about a mile from here, over on Launch Complex 39B. It will test the systems needed to get to Mars -- with missions to an asteroid and areas beyond the moon such as Lagrange points, where space observatories will be operating within our reach in the 2020s as we conduct the first deep space missions with astronauts since the Apollo moon landings.

We'll conduct missions that will each set their own impressive roster of firsts. First crew to visit and take samples of an asteroid, first crew to fly beyond the orbit of the moon, perhaps the first crew to grow its own food in space – all of which will set us up for humanity's next giant leap: the first crew to touch down on and take steps on the surface of Mars.

The partnerships we are announcing today for development of our commercial crew vehicles would not be possible without the hard work of hundreds of individuals dedicated to America's spirit of exploration and innovation. I especially want to commend the President and Congress providing us support for this new way of doing business. By combining private sector ingenuity with a bipartisan national commitment, and the unmatched expertise of NASA, we are not only better able to stretch the boundaries of the possible, we are strengthening our economy and creating good jobs for our people.

As President Obama has said, “We will not only extend humanity’s reach in space – we will strengthen America’s leadership here on Earth.”

Our destiny is set and our course is laid out before us and we are following it. We hope you will all be inspired to join us on this next great, ambitious leg of humanity’s journey farther into our solar system than ever before.

Thank you.