

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

September 13, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR:

GEORGE P. SHULTZ

FROM:

JON M. HUNTSMAN *JMH*

SUBJECT:

Future of NASA

The President read with interest and agreed with Mr. Weinberger's memorandum of August 12, 1971 on the subject of the future of NASA.

Further, the President approved Mr. Weinberger's plan to find enough reductions in other programs to pay for continuing NASA at generally the 3.3 - 3.4 billion dollar level, or about 400 to 500 million dollars more than the present planning targets.

Thank you.

cc: H. R. Haldeman  
Alexander P. Butterfield  
Caspar W. Weinberger

DETERMINED TO BE AN  
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING  
E.O. 12065, Section 6-102  
By MH Date 2/8/80

CONFIDENTIAL

August 12, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

From: Caspar W. Weinberger

Via: George P. Shultz

Subject: Future of NASA

*I agree with  
Cap*

Present tentative plans call for major reductions or change in NASA, by eliminating the last two Apollo flights (16 and 17), and eliminating or sharply reducing the balance of the Manned Space Program (Skylab and Space Shuttle) and many remaining NASA programs.

I believe this would be a mistake.

1) The real reason for sharp reductions in the NASA budget is that NASA is entirely in the 28% of the budget that is controllable. In short we cut it because it is cuttable, not because it is doing a bad job or an unnecessary one.

2) We are being driven, by the uncontrollable items, to spend more and more on programs that offer no real hope for the future: Model Cities, OEO, Welfare, interest on the National Debt, unemployment compensation, Medicare, etc. Of course, some of these have to be continued, in one form or another, but essentially they are programs, not of our choice, designed to repair mistakes of the past, not of our making.

3) We do need to reduce the budget, in my opinion, but we should not make all our reduction decisions on the basis of what is reducible, rather than on the merits of individual programs.

4) There is real merit to the future of NASA, and its proposed programs. The Space Shuttle and NERVA particularly offer the opportunity, among other things, to secure substantial scientific fall-out for the civilian economy at the same time that large numbers of valuable (and hard-to-employ-elsewhere) scientists and technicians are kept at work on projects that increase our knowledge of space, our ability to develop for lower cost space exploration, travel, and to secure, through NERVA, twice the existing propulsion efficiency for our rockets.

It is very difficult to re-assemble the NASA teams should it be decided later, after major stoppages, to re-start some of the long-range programs.

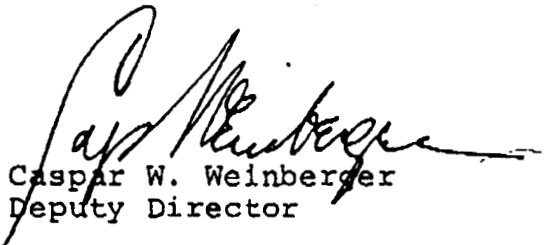
5) Recent Apollo flights have been very successful from all points of view. Most important is the fact that they give the American people a much needed lift in spirit, (and the people of the world an equally needed look at American superiority). Announcement now, or very shortly, that we were cancelling Apollo 16 and 17 (an announcement we would have to make very soon if any real savings are to be realized) would have a very bad effect, coming so soon after Apollo 15's triumph. It would be confirming, in some respects, a belief that I fear is gaining credence at home and abroad: That our best years are behind us, that we are turning inward, reducing our defense commitments, and voluntarily starting to give up our super-power status, and our desire to maintain our world superiority.

America should be able to afford something besides increased welfare, programs to repair our cities, or Appalachian relief and the like.

6) I do not propose that we necessarily fund all NASA seeks -- only that if we decide to eliminate Apollo 16 and 17, that we couple any announcement to that effect with announcements that we are going to fund space shuttles, NERVA, or other major, future NASA activities. We could perhaps base any announcement of curtailment of Apollo 16 and 17 on the ground that Apollo 15 was so successful in gathering needed data that we can now shift, sooner than previously expected, to the Space Shuttle, Grand Tour, NERVA, etc. Also, I am certainly

not suggesting that we give up our attempts to have NASA increase its efficiency, and eliminate waste or unnecessary expense in its base or elsewhere.

7) I believe I can find enough reductions in other programs to pay for continuing NASA at generally the \$3.3 - \$3.4 billion level I propose here. This figure is about \$400 - \$500 million more than the present planning targets. This would mean finding reductions elsewhere, so as to stay within the \$250 billion figure that is now our goal.

  
Caspar W. Weinberger  
Deputy Director