

Space Race Rekindled? Russia Shoots for Moon, Mars

Russian Space Agency Has Plan for Manned Missions to Moon and Maybe Mars

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The Russian space agency announced a plan to send a man to the moon by 2025, to establish a permanent base there a few years later, and possibly even send a man to Mars by 2035, in an aggressive plan reminiscent of the 1960s space race between the United States and the Soviet Union.

But Russia's plan to shoot for the stars is expensive, which is why it is looking for international assistance while relying on funding from its lucrative space tourism program.

One former American astronaut said while the Russians plan may be in motion, it is beginning from a difficult starting point.

"The Russians have some big ideas, but their space program is coming up slowly from being in a position bankruptcy," said Walter Cunningham, a former Apollo 7 astronaut.

As Russia plans out its space program, the U.S. space agency, NASA, struggles to chart its own way forward amid mounting costs and safety concerns.

History Repeating Itself

Russia's announcement has caused some to wonder if history will repeat itself.

Initially in the race for space dominance, the United States was forced to play catch up after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, which was the first unmanned spacecraft in 1957.

Then, four years later, the Soviets sent the first man into space.

But America also made large strides in space exploration. By 1969, the country blasted ahead in the space race by placing the first man on the moon.

"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," astronaut Neil Armstrong said as he took his first steps on the moon.

Exploration Success and Implications

Even today, the Russians have yet to reach the moon. Yet, Russian President Vladimir Putin continues charting a more ambitious course for his country, including a new exploration era.

The second man to step on the moon, Buzz Aldrin, said on "Good Morning America Weekend Edition" Sunday he believes the Russian program can be successful, but said he wouldn't call it a race with America.

Aldrin, who is a proponent of space exploration, said it is important for Americans to continue their interest in the stars for future generations, despite recent high profile negative press for NASA.

"Unfortunately, our transition from Apollo took much longer than we thought," Aldrin said about Americans' declining interest in space.

But for Russia, a moon landing may not only excite citizens, but also help project military might for Russia.

With the moon and Mars in Russia's sights, some believe the two powerhouse nations once again may be in a race toward the heavens.

And other nations also have expressed interest in space exploration. Japan claimed its project is the biggest since Apollo and China said it is readying probes to study the lunar surface to plan a landing, according to The Associated Press.

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