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NATIONAL SPACE SOCIETY DECRIES "STOP-GO" APPROACH OF NASA TO HUMAN EXPLORATION PROJECTS BEYOND LOW-EARTH-ORBIT

(Washington, DC) -- January 26, 1998 -- Today in Washington, National Space Society Executive Director Pat Dasch issued the following statement on the developing story of NASA's directive earlier this month that, as of January 30, "no activities uniquely directed toward human exploration beyond low- Earth-orbit shall be conducted by the Agency at this time."

According to Ms. Dasch, "This decision indicates a 'stop-go, go-stop' mode of operating at NASA. Background work on future human missions was accelerated just over a year ago in response to overwhelming public reaction to the possible finding of evidence of life on ancient Mars. What strategic planning mechanism suggests accelerating studies one year and terminating them the next?"

She adds, "We're witnessing a fall-out from our nation's lack of consensus on a long-term policy for space exploration. As of today, NASA planning for humans in space goes no further than 2002 and the completion of the Space Station assembly.

The station's major science objectives have been connected with improving our understanding of how humans relate to the space environment. It is hard to believe that these objectives are taken seriously when studies related to the missions that would pay a return on the Space Station investment are to be discontinued.

This action also represents an inevitable outcome of an Administration that does not support human space exploration. Since President Clinton took office, overall funding for NASA has declined every year. The Administration has yet to take ownership of the Space Station or to offer a solution of supplemental funding which would release NASA from having to sacrifice ongoing research on future human missions for what is to be gained with Space Station. Now is the time for the Administration to step up and supply NASA with an option."

The National Space Society, founded in 1974, is an independent, nonprofit space advocacy organization headquartered in Washington, DC. Its 25,000 members and 95 chapters around the world actively promote a spacefaring civilization. Information on NSS and space exploration is available at <<http://www.nss.org/>>.

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