

## Orion Spacecraft Successfully Launches And Returns To Earth In Near “Perfect” Mission

NBC Nightly News (12/5/14, story 3, 2:40, Williams) broadcast on NASA’s successful test flight of the Orion spacecraft on Friday. Reporter Tom Costello noted that Orion traveled farther “than any spacecraft built for humans in 42 years,” adding that its “spectacular” return showed that NASA “still has the right stuff.” Orion Program Manager Mike Hawes said, “We started with all the Apollo guys still there, so we’ve kind of now finally done something for the first time for our generation.” Costello noted that with decades before people are sent to Mars on the spacecraft, there are still “many more years...of tests and hurdles.”

ABC World News (12/5/14, story 4, 2:05, Muir) broadcast that the “perfect landing” accomplished something not done “in four decades.” Reporter David Kerley highlighted NASA’s successful launch “just weeks after two private space companies” suffered accidents. Even though NASA’s budget means that there will not be a manned flight in Orion until 2021, Kerley called the test a “welcomed success.”

The CBS Evening News (12/5/14, story 11, 2:15, Dubois) broadcast that Mark Geyer, in charge of Orion at NASA, said that the launch is “the beginning of showing that, you know, the United States is getting back to exploring the solar system. And Orion has the systems that we’re going to need to do that, and today we put them to the test.” ABC News’ Chip Reid noted that reaching Mars with Orion “will depend on whether future congresses, future presidents, and future American publics are willing to spend untold billions to get there.” However, Geyer said that NASA will “absolutely” reach Mars on day, adding, “No doubt about it and it started today.”

The AP (12/5/14, Dunn) noted that the test with its “bull’s-eye” landing is the beginning of “a new era of human exploration.” An “emotional” lead flight director Mike Sarafin said, “We challenged our best and brightest to continue to lead in space. ... While this was an unmanned mission, we were all on board Orion.” According to the article, NASA has already reported “positive results” about how well the systems handled the “intense radiation” and heat. Meanwhile, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden called Friday’s launch “Day One of the Mars era.”

According to the Wall Street Journal (12/5/14, Pasztor, Subscription Publication), the launch temporarily increased interest in NASA’s long-term manned spaceflight goals, even as lawmakers question NASA’s next steps. However, Bolden said Friday was “a big day for the world, for people who know and like space.” Geyer added that “it’s hard to have a better day than today.” The article noted that some even thought that the test was reminiscent of NASA’s Apollo era.

Like ABC World News, the New York Times (12/5/14, Fountain, Subscription Publication) also called the test flight a “welcome success” after October’s commercial spaceflight accidents. William H. Gerstenmaier, NASA associate administrator for Human Exploration and Operations, said that a preliminary review of the data “looks really good. We will really learn things from this flight.” The article did note that “many viewers” of the live launch were disappointed by a problem with NASA TV’s live video feed, but replays and “live video of the splashdown, from cameras aboard the capsule and a drone aircraft,” went without a hitch.

The Washington Post (12/5/14, Davenport) “The Switch” blog reported that the mission went off “flawlessly.” However, even with the “talk of grand plans to go to Mars,” NASA still is “hampered” by its budget. Marco Caceres of the Teal Group warned that Orion needs the Space Launch System (SLS), which is “a big question mark” currently. He added that it was a “stretch” to say that the US is heading to Mars at this point. The Washington Post (12/5/14, Feltman) “Speaking of Science” blog posted an image of Earth taken from Orion while it was in space.