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Title of Talk: **Mars Direct: Humans to the Red Planet within a Decade**

In July 1989, on the 20th anniversary of the Apollo Moon landing, the first President Bush called for America to renew its pioneering push into space with the establishment of a permanent Lunar base and a series of human missions to Mars. While many have said that such an endeavor would be excessively costly and take many decades, a small team at Martin Marietta drew up a daring plan that could sharply cut costs and send a group of American astronauts to the Red Planet within ten years. The plan, known as "Mars Direct," has attracted international attention and broad controversy, including coverage in such publications as Newsweek, Fortune, The Economist, Air and Space Smithsonian, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the London Times, the Boston Globe and Izvestia. It has also been covered by the Discovery Channel, PBS, ABC, NBC, CBS, National Public Radio, and the BBC. Its principal author, Robert Zubrin, has presented it to such fora as the blue ribbon "Synthesis Group" headed by former Apollo astronaut General Thomas Stafford, the Augustine Committee, as well as to various government officials, including House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Senator John McCain, and NASA Administrators Dan Goldin, Mike Griffin, and Charles Bolden.

Now, with nation debating how to proceed with human space exploration, the "Mars Direct" plan is more relevant than ever: Can Americans reach the Red Planet in our time?

Robert Zubrin, formerly a Staff Engineer at Lockheed Martin Astronautics in Denver is now president of his own company, Pioneer Astronautics. He holds Masters degrees in Aeronautics and Astronautics and a doctorate in Nuclear Engineering from the University of Washington. He is the inventor of several unique concepts for space propulsion and exploration, the author of over 200 published technical and non-technical papers in the field, as well the non-fiction books "The Case for Mars: The Plan to Settle the Red Planet and Why We Must" (Simon and Schuster 1996), "Entering Space" (Tarcher Putnam 1999), "Mars on Earth" (Tarcher Penguin 2003), "Energy Victory" (Prometheus Books, 2007) and "Merchants of Despair," (Encounter Books, 2012). He is also the author of the novels "The Holy Land," (Polaris Books, 2003) and "First Landing," (Ace 2001), and the science-humor immigrant guidebook, "How to Live on Mars" (Three Rivers Press, 2008). He is a Fellow of the British Interplanetary Society and former Chairman of the Executive Committee of the National Space Society. He is the founder of the Mars Society; an international organization dedicated to furthering the exploration and settlement of Mars by both public and private means. In that capacity, he personally led the construction and operation of a human Mars exploration training station on Devon Island, an uninhabited island in the Canadian Arctic 900 miles from the North Pole. Prior to his work in astronautics, Dr. Zubrin was employed in areas of thermonuclear fusion research, nuclear engineering, radiation protection, and as a high school science teacher.