Eugene Francis “Gene” Kranz

Apollo 13 Flight Director

NASA: Apollo 13

It has now been nine years since the start of the Apollo program. Nine glorious years during which we put a man on the Moon. Nine hard years of continuous work and effort. Nine long years of success. However, we must not dwell upon our accomplishments. We must not forget the events of Apollo 1, nor those of Apollo 6. Today, Apollo 13 needs our help. The three young men out there, tens of thousands of kilometers away from home, rely on the hard work of us, back here on Earth, to get them to the Moon and back home safe. It is the expectations of a nation that we carry, but it is the whole world that is watching. Failure is not an option.

Our primary goal for the meeting of key NASA figures is figure out what is wrong with Apollo 13. Our top priority here is the safety of our astronauts. The success of the mission comes second. We must retain communication with 13 at all costs. Our boys out there depend on us to keep them safe, and we will do our job of keeping them safe. Teamwork here will be invaluable. Astronauts wouldn’t exist without Mission Control, and Mission Control wouldn’t exist without astronauts. Let’s not forget about our friends from PR and the top dogs of NASA. Together, we will pinpoint the problem. We must rely on the ingenuity of our research teams to come up with a plan in case something goes wrong. We must trust in the capability of our astronauts to perform extensive manoeuvers. We must believe in the competency of Flight Control when it comes to operations. And we must put our trust in God.

My involvement with NASA goes back to 1960; I started as Mission Control procedures officer under Kraft. I’ve been through both the Mercury and Gemini programs. I’ve seen firsthand the capability of our engineers and officers here; I’ve also been disappointed by them on rare occasions. I was there, as Flight Director, when Neil Armstrong first stepped on the Moon, on July 20, 1969. Back then, I also celebrated with everyone the success of our Apollo project. But I was also there for Apollo I, when three brilliant young men died. 3 years ago, after Apollo 1, I said that from now on, Flight Control would be referred to as “tough” and “competent”. So far, I have not been disappointed. But today is the real test. Today, Mission Control will be tested. And today, Mission Control will succeed.

Gene Kranz,

Apollo 13 Flight Director