



Pro & Con

Should U.S. send men back to moon?

The Human Space Flight Plans Committee, appointed by President Barack Obama, is examining whether Americans will return to the moon by 2020, which has been NASA's goal since President George W. Bush's "Vision for Space Exploration" in 2004. The committee's final report is due by the end of the month, although early reports suggest budgetary concerns are among reasons that Bush's goal for men on the moon is in question.



Yes

Robert G. Loewy, professor of aerospace engineering, Georgia Tech

When President John F. Kennedy announced a national goal of putting a man on the moon in the 1960s, he said it wouldn't be easy, but it was worth doing precisely because it would be difficult. Further lunar exploration now, almost a half-century later, is worthwhile for the same reason. Regardless of what may be found of value to man on the moon, learning how to survive there is likely to be essential to further exploration of space and its planets. The debate as to whether one space mission or another should be manned or robotic doesn't enter these considerations. Mankind will never be satisfied, ultimately, with vicarious exploration. How to survive in hostile environments is as pertinent now as it was for Lewis and Clark.



No

Stephen Fleming, vice provost at Georgia Tech

NASA shouldn't go back to the moon, but individual Americans should – as explorers and entrepreneurs and colonists. In the 1960s, America won the space race with the Soviets, but we went to the moon too early, before the technology was cost-effective. This time, we should find ways to explore, exploit and colonize the Moon with a national space program designed to create and support a new space industry – not another "flags and footprints" mission with no real-world impact. We can build a new economic sector in which America leads the world, and which supports tens of thousands of high-quality jobs here on Earth.

It's not NASA's job to send astronauts back to the moon. NASA's job should be to make it possible for the National Geographic Society to send astronauts to the moon.