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OPPOSING APOLLO: PUBLIC RESISTANCE TO THE MOON LANDINGS

Abstract

Rising criticisms of the current direction of U.S. human spaceflight, especially the Constellation program, as a star-crossed engineering effort have led defenders of the effort to compare it to the Apollo program. During the question and answer period of the American Astronautical Society's von Braun Symposium on October 21, 2008, Ares Project Manager Steve Cook passed off technical criticism of Ares with a reference that such criticism was nothing new, that it had always swirled around NASA. Even the vaunted Apollo program, he insisted, experienced significant criticism both internal and external to the space agency. This response seemed unusual, essentially making the case that criticism of major projects undertaken by NASA, especially in human spaceflight, routinely endured significant criticism from all quarters. How true might that be? Did Apollo engender significant criticism? Where did that criticism originate? How was it manifested and what did it consist of? How does that experience compare to the current critical analyses of NASA's human spaceflight efforts?