The End of the Road?
Richard P. Hallion certainly got it right in your October issue when he said we have reached an “inflection point” in the space race (“An Inflection Point in the Space Race,” p. 54). After a quarter-century of disasters and false starts in human spaceflight, the Obama Administration has proposed a new approach that could signal the end of the road. The Constellation program that President Obama inherited from the Bush years may not have been imaginative, but at least it had a destination. The Obama plan lacks a clear goal.

Where Hallion goes wrong is in trying to explain what a sustainable space effort would look like. There are lots of places worth visiting by robotic means, but if our goal is to sustain a human spaceflight program with all the costs that entails, only one goal makes sense: Mars. Mars is the single place in the solar system beyond the Earth that could conceivably host a self-sustaining colony of humans, because it is on the edge of the habitability zone that begins outside the orbit of Venus and ends well inside the orbit of Jupiter. It has the right mix of gravity, water, and sunlight to make a human colony at least conceivable.

Yet Hallion says, “Dreams of Mars make little sense in a time when key space infrastructure is being closed, thousands are leaving the aerospace field, and American astronauts learn Russian so that they can ride Soyuz into space.” The main reason these negative trends are unfolding is that we have not identified a credible mission to justify the vast cost of the human spaceflight program. If we are going to build a heavy-lift launch vehicle, a new crew capsule, and all the other items associated with human spaceflight, then there must be a mission that the political system can grasp. Landing astronauts on Mars around 2030 as a prelude to a permanent colony is the only rationale that works within the constraints imposed by democracy and physics.

Loren B. Thompson
Arlington, Va.

Richard Hallion’s gratuitous, snide swipes at Democratic Administrations, the “left,” and others in his article, “An Inflection Point in the Space Race,” seriously detracted from the credibility of what could otherwise have been considered an insightful account of the genesis and evolution of US space policy. Worse, they reflect poorly on the reputation for objectivity necessary for the Air Force Association to be effective in its mission. As a retired Air Force officer, I expect better of AFA, in which I hold life membership.

Lt. Col. Stephen D. Vining, USAF (Ret.)
Dayton, Ohio

A Backbone Needed
“The Acquisition Course Correction” [October, p. 30] by John A. Tirpak shows directly and by inference what is wrong with the procurement system and, further, what is wrong with the proposed solution: namely, throwing thousands of more people into the fray. There are already too many people and too many generals in the system. The problem is that the newcomers will not know how to manage large systems.

Putting stars on combat fatigues won’t help unless the wearer knows what he is doing. Bringing up experienced and well-trained negotiators from the thousands of military and civilian procurement managers already available might help more. As a program manager for 15 years in both USAF and the defense industry,

Do you have a comment about a current article in the magazine? Write to “Letters,” Air Force Magazine, 1501 Lee Highway, Arlington, VA 22209-1198. (E-mail: letters@afa.org.) Letters should be concise and timely. We cannot acknowledge receipt of letters. We reserve the right to condense letters. Letters without name and city/base and state are not acceptable. Photographs cannot be used or returned.—THE EDITORS
I have witnessed the mismatch when an aerospace company manager with 30 years’ experience outsmarts a general with very few years of experience in procurement, at every turn during important meetings where decisions are made.

Serious discussions I have had on the subject usually conclude that we need a backbone of dedicated, experienced, technically qualified civil service managers to complement the military managers who simply drift in and out every two or three years. Likewise, we need to support those major producers that year after year render militarily competitive weapons—and shut down those that produce junk.

Several conflicts exist. One major fact is that an aerospace company wants to generate sales dollars and does not care whether it is for delivered hardware or extended engineering sales; whereas, the military manager wants delivered hardware on schedule. The result is systems that after 20 years of development have used up all of the funds, and only a tiny few combat vehicles loaded with complex and unreliable hardware dribble out of the factory.

We need to guard against military program managers who are more concerned with getting a good job when they retire than antagonizing contractors by being tough with them, and civil service managers who overstaff to create empires and added ratings for themselves. In both cases, somebody better be watching to be sure that our beloved country comes first. I don’t see that happening from what I read in the article.

Lorrin Peterson
Kerrville, Tex.

**Leadership Adjustment**

Your “Washington Watch” section under the title “Piecing It Together” (October, p. 10) incorrectly states the Honorable Peter B. Teets as undersecretary of the Air Force “was not replaced for the rest of the Bush Administration.” Ron Sega served as USECAF and DOD executive agent for space from August 2005 through September 2007.

The Bush Administration nominated Sega, who had served as DoD director of research and engineering (DDR&E) since 2001, in the summer of 2005 to be the next USECAF, DoD EA/Space, and director, NRO (DNRO). During that same time, the Bush Administration, as recommended by the 9/11 Commission, consolidated the US Intelligence Community (IC) under the newly created Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). In a political move to shore up authority for the newly established ODNI and provide greater focus on NRO organizational and programmatic issues, the newly appointed director of national intelligence, John Negroponte, and then-Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld agreed to separate the positions of USECAF, DOD EA/Space, and DNRO. Don Kerr was appointed DNRO. The DNRO had consistently also served in the past as either USECAF or SECAF, and in an attempt to maintain some formal Air Force leadership coordination with the DNRO, Kerr was appointed as an assistant to the secretary of the Air Force for space and technology. However, integration and synergy across the US National Security Space Enterprise (NSS) remained elusive.

Leadership of the NSSE remains fragmented. The recent Air Force study of space organizations and resultant SECAF policy memo go a long way in redefining and strengthening the Air Force position. The Air Force is getting its house in order. I do, however, respectfully disagree with the policy position that USECAF and DNRO jobs are “too big” to hold together (they have not been in the past); that said, the cultural, budgetary, and political turbulence needs to settle. All stakeholders in the NSSE would be well-advised to follow the Air Force lead and more fully define their roles, responsibilities, and equities before any more serious efforts at national integration can happen.

Lt. Col. Darren J. Buck
USAFR
Colorado Springs, Colo.

**Atomic Mission**

As a career officer in the United States Air Force, I had an interest in the *Enola Gay* story simply because it is part of the history of USAF [*“Atomic Mission,” October, p. 73*]. However, just over two years ago, my father (a draftee into the United States Army) told me that he was stationed on one of the outlying Japanese Islands in early August 1945 as part of the invasion force scheduled to begin the bloody battles to bring World War II to a close. The invasion never happened, specifically because of the two USAF atomic bomb missions over Japan. It was as my father told his story that the importance of the mission referenced in the article became quite clear. My immediate family of both parents, my sister, and myself quite probably owed our existence on this Earth to those two bloody battles to bring World War II to a close. The invasion never happened, specifically because of the two USAF atomic bomb missions over Japan. It was as my father told his story that the importance of the mission referenced in the article became quite clear. My immediate family of both parents, my sister, and myself quite probably owed our existence on this Earth to those two B-29 crews that dropped the atomic bombs that ended World War II. As my father told his story, the *Enola Gay* immediately came to mind—and it suddenly became deeply personal.

Those who doubt the efficacy of the use of the atomic bomb on Japan need merely look to their own personal existence to see the impact of the decision...
to use the bomb and those who executed that decision. I probably owe my life to Paul Tibbets, as do many millions of other Americans.

Lt. Col. John Bredfeldt, USAF (Ret.)
Macon, Ga.

The atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima was described in your magazine as “the first atomic bomb.” What would you call that thing we set off at Trinity a few weeks earlier, then?

John E. Payne
Oakland, N.J.

New Dawn
I bring to your attention the centerfold shot of an F-16 from the 114th Fighter Wing “Lobos” from South Dakota loaded for bear with the C-17 on final in the background (“A New Dawn in Iraq,” October, p. 46).

A very nice shot; however, the 114th FW is based in South Dakota at Joe Foss Field, Sioux Falls, S.D., [and is] named after legendary World War II Marine Corps ace and Medal of Honor recipient Brig. Gen. Joseph J. “Joe” Foss. Sioux Gateway Airport is located in Sioux City, Iowa (84 miles south of Sioux Falls), and is home to the 185th Air Refueling Wing (KC-135).

MSgt. Michael J. Asher, USAF (Ret.)
Des Moines, Iowa

Old Glory
I always look for my issue of Air Force Magazine to keep up with those serving. If I may take issue with the photo “Screenshot” of the Air Force Academy cadets at Falcon Stadium with the US flag (“Air Force World”) on p. 13 of the October issue:

I hope that someday Congress will amend the Flag Code (36 U.S.C.) with regard to what has become almost a ritual (incorrectly done) at large open air ceremonies of a patriotic nature—that is, our national flag being carried flat or horizontally, with many persons supporting the edges to keep it above ground.

The Flag Code is very specific about it being carried “always aloft and free” and, therefore, not flat or horizontal.

I know that in all cases, this is being done with no disrespect to our colors; it is just a nice display—although still not in accordance with the Flag Code.

CMSgt. John E. Schmidt Jr., USAF (Ret.)
Tallahassee, Fla.

A Toss Up
MSgt. Paul Soucy in his letter (published in the September 2010 issue relative to the July Air Force Magazine article “Nukes For NATO”) states that: “Toss bombing was established and tested using the F-105 aircraft.” However, in the summer of 1953, I worked as a team member in the Armament Division at Eglin AFB, Fla., in a program designed to deliver the Mk VII atom bomb to a target using the F-84G fighter-bomber. These Mk 7 units were complete except for the nuclear material. (Otherwise the neighbors might complain.) A TDY group of TAC personnel were in charge of the Mk 7s, while us Eglin armament people handled the GP 500-pound sand-filled “dumb” bombs (with black powder burster charge). In all test flights, a Mk 7 was carried under the left wing to evaluate flight-handling characteristics, but was not tossed. Instead, a 500-pound dumb bomb was carried under the right wing, and that one was tossed on each test flight. These tests entailed tossing only the dumb bombs for three or four months, until the project leaders were confident that they had learned as much as they could from that phase of testing. The second phase of the project, which involved the actual tossing of the Mk 7s, did not start until around November.

Tom Blair
Garrettsville, Ohio