

# Eugene F. Kranz



*Tough means we are forever accountable for what we do or what we fail to do.*

*Competent means we will never take anything for granted.*

**Eugene F. “Gene” Kranz** (born August 17, 1933) served as NASA’s Flight Director for the Gemini and Apollo programs, including the Apollo 11 moon landing and the Apollo 13 mission.

## 1 Quotes

- **Spaceflight will never tolerate carelessness, incapacity, and neglect.** Somewhere, somehow, we screwed up. It could have been in design, build, or test. Whatever it was, we should have caught it. We were too gung ho about the schedule and we locked out all of the problems we saw each day in our work. Every element of the program was in trouble and so were we. The simulators were not working, Mission Control was behind in virtually every area, and the flight and test procedures changed daily. Nothing we did had any shelf life. Not one of us stood up and said, “Dammit, stop!” I don’t know what Thompson’s committee will find as the cause, but I know what I find. We are the



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cause! We were not ready! We did not do our job. We were rolling the dice, hoping that things would come together by launch day, when in our hearts we knew it would take a miracle. We were pushing the schedule and betting that the Cape would slip before we did.

From this day forward, Flight Control will be known by two words: **"Tough and Competent."** *Tough means we are forever accountable for what we do or what we fail to do.* We will never again compromise our responsibilities. Every time we walk into Mission Control we will know what we stand for.

**Competent means we will never take anything for granted.** We will never be found short in our knowledge and in our skills. Mission Control will be perfect.

When you leave this meeting today you will go to your office and the first thing you will do there is to write "Tough and Competent" on your blackboards. It will *never* be erased. Each day when you enter the room these words will remind you of the price paid by Grissom, White, and Chaffee. **These words are the price of admission to the ranks of Mission Control.**

- Address to his branch and flight control team on the Monday morning following the Apollo 1 disaster (30 January 1967), known as "The Kranz Dictum"; as published in *Failure Is Not An Option : Mission Control from Mercury to Apollo 13 and Beyond* (2000) by Gene Kranz, p. 204. The phrase "*tough and competent*" was echoed by NASA Director Sean O'Keefe following the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster, adding that "these words are the price of admission to the ranks of NASA, and we should adopt it that way."
- **We had risen to probably one of the greatest challenges in history, put a man on the moon in the decade. We'd created incredible technologies. But what was most important, we'd created the teams, what I call the human factor.** People who were energized by a mission. And these teams were capable of moving right on and doing anything America asked them to do in space. And what we did is we watched these teams disappear. We watched the great contractors — the Grummans, the North Americans, the Lockheeds — disappear from the horizon. I think that's really sad that as Americans we have destroyed much of this infrastructure that we had in the days when we went to the moon.
  - On the teams created in the 1960s during the Space Race, in "Space Lifeguard : An Interview with Gene Kranz" at Space.com (11 April 2000)
- In many ways we have the young people, we have the talent, we have the imagination, we have the technology. But I don't believe we have the leadership and the willingness to accept risk, to achieve great goals. **I believe we need a long-term national commitment to explore the universe. And I believe this**

**is an essential investment in the future of our nation — and our beautiful, but environmentally challenged planet.**

- "Space Lifeguard : An Interview with Gene Kranz" at Space.com (11 April 2000)

## 2 Misattributed

- Failure is not an option.
  - Statement attributed to him in the film *Apollo 13* (1995), which he had not actually used in that crisis. He later used the phrase as the title of his autobiography.

## 3 External links

- "Space Lifeguard : An Interview with Gene Kranz" at Space.com (11 April 2000)
- Apollo 13 Hero Eugene Kranz to Receive Honorary Degree at MSOE Commencement; Captain James Lovell Jr., Commander of Apollo 13, Will be Escort
- "Eugene F. KRANZ" interview conducted by Rebecca Wright of the Johnson Space Center Oral History Project, (8 January 1999)
- Op-Ed written by Kranz for The Hill (12 June 2007)
- Apollo 13 (mission and movie)

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