

## **2018: THE CONQUEST OF SPACE HAS JUST TURNED DEADLY!**

While America prepares for a return to the Moon in 2020, the Chinese land a military expedition at the lunar South Pole and in defiance of UN treaties: seize the Moon's subsurface ice fields and mineral resources for the People's Republic of China. African-American President Cordelier Price, thrust into her role as Commander in Chief by an assassin's bullet, must enlist the aid of defiant former NASA astronaut, John McGovern, to lead an international coalition and stake a counterclaim. McGovern, however, finds that he must share his command with a beautiful female Russian cosmonaut. Together they face traitors, assassins, and the Chinese military that will stop at nothing to end their quest. As the coalition's crew battle for their lives on the unforgiving surface of the Moon, China's true plans for global domination emerge, sending the world on a collision course toward nuclear war.

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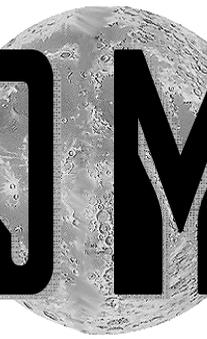
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# RED MOON



CHRTS BERMAN



**Leo Publishing, LLC**

This is a work of fiction. All names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

RED MOON

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This novel is dedicated to former NASA Astronaut, Dr. Norman Thagard, whose expertise and technical advice in writing this story were very much appreciated. This story is also dedicated to every man and woman, from every nation--past, present, and yet to be born--who will set our feet firmly on the road to the stars.

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I especially thank my wife and children for their support and enthusiasm.

**Foreword by Dr. Norman Thagard, Physician,  
Engineer, and NASA Astronaut. The first US crew  
member of the Russian MIR space station.**

"*Red Moon*" is captivating. I found myself reading it in very short order because I couldn't bear to stop reading. Although the action is almost nonstop, the characters are very well developed. With a background as fighter pilot, engineer, physician, and astronaut, I am sensitive to the point of loss of interest in stories that erroneously portray those professions and it is this quality that frequently turns me off to science fiction works. That was not a problem with "*Red Moon*." To the contrary, a great strength of the book is that, while fiction, it is very believable. The book is also timely. It is obvious at the time of this writing that the Chinese are serious about becoming major players in space. Their exploits of the past few years and their apparent plans for the future leave no doubt that the intent is to compete with and ultimately exceed the capabilities of the United States in human spaceflight. I recommend *Red Moon* without reservation. It is well-researched and well-written. The book should hold the attention of even the most jaded reader.

—Norman E. Thagard, M.D., NASA Astronaut (Retired)

# INTRODUCTION

The battle for resources is as old as man. First between individuals, then tribes, and later nations. In the 1500s, with Spain's discovery of the riches of the new world, treaties and agreements were promptly drawn up between the nation states of Europe to equitably divide those resources, and just as promptly those agreements were shredded by cannon and musket fire as those nations battled each other on land and the high seas to possess them.

In 1998, the NASA spacecraft Lunar Prospector made a startling discovery. Water in the form of ice, accumulated over billions of years from comet impacts, might lie frozen below areas of the Aitkin Basin, under the soil of the Moon's South Pole, blanketed in perpetual darkness, frozen to minus 370 degrees Fahrenheit. By 2009, NASA confirmed the existence of water ice on the Moon, and in 2014 an unmanned Chinese lunar probe located the buried ice fields, one meter below the rubble-strewn surface.

For the conquest and exploitation of the Moon's wealth of titanium and aluminum ores, and the harnessing of the riches of the solar system, a readily available supply of water for colonists as well as fuel in the form of hydrogen and oxygen – the two elements of water – needs to be present. Whatever nation or nations control these resources will control the Moon, and control of the Moon is control over which nations are permitted access to space and who has ownership of the solar system's vast bounty.

This is the story of just such a battle in the near future to gain and hold the high ground in man's new frontier. It is a cautionary tale as well, for while mankind's technology advances at a fearful rate, man's acquisitive and aggressive nature remain as they were when his most deadly weapons were the spear and the bow and arrow. This is the story of *Red Moon*.

– Chris Berman

[www.freewebs.com/chrisbfla](http://www.freewebs.com/chrisbfla)

## RED MOON

The gestures of the moon have faded  
washed out through the busy urban street,  
which shut the moon's warm features meant to greet.  
Time morphing dark embroidery on skyline dinner banquet,  
the one enchanting guests, indeed,  
and used to make them want to eat,  
to washed-out veil locking in disgrace glum host's face

...

by the same city rays which laid it.

No longer was the moon allowed to speak  
true wondrous secrets that it used to hold--  
trusting a young soul trapped within a corpse that's old  
--whose sailors gloried under infinite, black blanket  
reduced to present treatment from a heart turned cold.  
They garbled precious secrets; distance bridged the bold.  
Staccato sign left mindless passer not a trace of moon's face

...

while claret stained a moon, as would a wine leak.

~ **Marina Sergeyeva**

***Upstairs***

(Used with permission)

# PROLOGUE

HE STOOD MOTIONLESS as the bitterly cold wind clawed at his flight suit. His mind was trying to will away one word on the paper he had just been handed: “not.” “*The addition of this item has not been approved.*”

“Nikolai, I don’t like it not one damn bit, especially how they waited ‘til *now* to tell us.”

“What is expression of the English: Ours is not to question why, ours is but to do and die? We are soldiers, you and I, *da?* So, we obey our orders even if we know they are given by idiots.”

Major Roy Jackson took in a deep breath, feeling the inside of his nostrils ice up in the sub-zero air of a Russian winter. “Yeah, only it’s a shame in my country that the idiots are in the American Congress who think our *friends* up there are going to obey treaties and play by the rules.”

“Don’t feel bad. *My* country’s idiots went along with them.”

Major Jackson looked at the message again, shaking his head, and called over to the Russian officer. “Hey, what are you doing?”

Colonel Schevyenskey had turned his back to the American to face the massive Soyuz rocket on the launch pad. Unzipping the pants of his flight suit, he took aim at the rear tire of the transport van that had delivered both men to the launch pad, soaking it with a steaming stream in the freezing air. “I’m pissing on the transporter. It is tradition since first done by Yuri Gagarin. Ever since then, all cosmonauts must do this before launch...for luck.”

Jackson grabbed the zipper on his own flight suit and opened it. “In that case, I’ll join you. We’re going to need all the luck we can get.”

Closing the front of his suit, Roy Jackson looked around, his eyes drinking in the snow-covered landscape, the green of the pine trees against the impossible depth of a blue winter sky. He did so with a deep sense of foreboding. It was a sense of finality that many men on the eve of battle felt, giving away possessions and writing final letters to loved ones. It was the hollow feeling in Jackson's gut that this would be the last time he would ever stand upon the world of his birth. Finally, he turned to Nicolai Schevyenskey, his breath steaming out in clouds. "Okay, let's light this candle and get the hell out of here."

\* \* \* \*

Colonel Schevyenskey adjusted the orbital path of the Soyuz-Salyut lunar station, watching the dirty gray half-illuminated sphere of the Moon swell before his eyes. Roy Jackson, a veteran of over a dozen spaceflights, sat next to him in the cramped quarters of the Soyuz. They had exited the Salyut station an hour earlier to prepare for the braking maneuver that would place them in a circumpolar orbit about the Moon. The Salyut, one of four that had sat in storage at the Baikonur launch complex in Kazakhstan for over forty years, had gone through a complete upgrade with modern computers and control systems. It was rolled out and launched into space on top of a mighty Proton rocket. Once in orbit, the station was mated to a NASA-built Antares rocket to hurl it out of Earth's gravity well and place their ship on a course for the Moon. In a separate launch from Plesetsk, the military rocket base in Northern Russia, Colonel Schevyenskey and Major Jackson piloted their Soyuz to the ungainly looking moon station, docked and then set off for lunar orbit.

After three days of watching the half-illuminated and cratered orb grow ever larger, it was time for the final braking maneuver that would take them over the lunar South Pole and the no man's land of the Moon's far side, blocking any radio transmissions from the Earth.

As the station closed the distance to the battered and pockmarked world below, sweat beaded up on both men, despite the chilly interior temperature of the capsule. In a matter of minutes, the station would be

over the Aitkin Basin at the Moon's South Pole. Hidden below was a land that had been blanketed in everlasting night for billions of years. Somewhere on that dark rubble-strewn plain was the Chinese moon base and fuel production facility hidden in the darkness. Just minutes earlier, the radar detectors on the outer hull of the station sent a signal to the internal alarm system, bleating out a warning that they had been found by powerful Chinese search radar.

The space station, to which the men's Soyuz was affixed to, stood out like a brilliant point of light on Corporal Chang Wu's radar screen situated in the command dome of the Chinese base. He would need to wait only a few more moments until the spacecraft slid behind the southern limb of the Moon and away from the prying eyes of those on Earth. Wu again glanced at his screen. It was time. With the nod of his head, the base's senior officer authorized Wu to transmit a launch command to a bank of *Han* anti-satellite missiles sited 500 meters from the base's camouflaged dome.

As the Soyuz-Salyut spacecraft passed out of radio contact behind the Moon's far side, all hell broke loose...

"Jackson, I show a launch from South Pole! It is a missile! It has radar lock on our ship!"

Roy Jackson stared down at his display and desperately applied power to the attitude jets to alter their ship's path. "Damn it! I can't shake it! Hang on, Colonel, I'm going to try and outrun it!"

The valves on the Antares's fuel and oxidizer tanks opened and began pouring the ingredients of liquid fire on their paths down the engine's fuel lines. The pressure within the rocker motor's combustion chamber built with Jackson counting down. "Five ... four ... three ... two ... one ... ignition!"

Pumps spinning at thousands of RPMs sent liquid oxygen and hydrogen on a collision course to a controlled explosion in the rocket's reaction chamber, and the main engine fired. At that same instant, the *Han* missile closed to within twenty meters of the craft, and a shaped charge in the warhead detonated. Like a shotgun blast, over a thousand,

ten-millimeter steel balls closed the gap to the moon station at several thousand feet per second, slamming into the Antares engine, blasting apart the reaction chamber and starting an explosion that propagated through the Salyut station, peeling its outer hull back like the skin of a banana. Finally, the steel balls reached the Soyuz, shredding the capsule and slicing off the two extended solar panels like denuding a dragonfly of its wings. Colonel Nicolai Schevyenskey's last thoughts, like that of Major Jackson's, were of his family and his sincere wish that the politicians who sent them on this mission without defensive weapons would rot in hell.

Twenty minutes passed at the Houston Space Center. By now, the moon station should have been out of the Moon's radio shadow. Twenty-five minutes, then thirty, with desperate calls bleating into space. After more than forty-two minutes from the point that the station would have emerged beyond the lunar far side, a radio transmission broke the palpable tension at the space center. However, it was not the call that anyone wanted to hear.

In heavily accented English, a disembodied Chinese voice spoke with chilling finality. "Houston, this is the Chinese moon base calling. This is General Wang in command. We regret to inform you of an unfortunate accident with your spacecraft. It has been struck and destroyed by a meteor as it passed near our base. Our scans reveal no survivors. China deeply regrets the loss of your astronauts due to this very unfortunate matter."

# CHAPTER ONE

## *The White House, Office of the President of the United States*

President Cordelier Price sat in her executive chair, arms resting on the dark mahogany desk. Thrust into the role of America's first woman chief executive by an assassin's bullet that took the life of President John Richmond just eighteen months earlier, she was proving to America and the world that behind her smile and slim figure lurked a tiger that could go toe to toe with any world leader. Her first crisis in fact came within hours of her taking the oath of office on board Air Force One as doctors in San Francisco's Mission Hill Hospital reluctantly shut down the life support systems to President John H. Richmond's body. It was clear to the team of surgeons that the massive damage to his brain caused by a .30-caliber copper jacket bullet was beyond repair. In those dark hours, Cordelier Price took control of the "football," the launch codes to America's nuclear ICBM forces as the Taiwan crises exploded in the China Sea. In a well-planned operation that coincided with the death of the American President, an invasion force from the Chinese mainland set sail across the straits of Formosa as Chinese fighter aircraft attacked and bombed the nationalist island. While many in Congress pleaded with Price to stand aside, she did not and forced an end to the confrontation with a demonstrating of just how high the stakes were that the Chinese Communists were playing with. A Stealth bomber, flying undetected over the Chinese mainland, launched a cruise missile with a dummy nuclear warhead that landed within a dozen meters of Chinese Communist Party headquarters inside the walls of the Forbidden City. As soon as the impact was confirmed, newly appointed President Price made direct contact with the Chinese

Premier. Without threats and without bluster, she simply asked him, “When will your ships and aircraft be returning to the mainland?” She didn’t have to issue an ultimatum; her actions spoke louder than words.

In her heart, Cordelier Price knew the assassination of her president and her friend was ordered and carried out by the Chinese as a prelude to their invasion. However, they had seriously miscalculated the will and strength of the first African American female vice president.

Burning with anger, her hand reached down to the football and caressed the launch code keys – the keys to open the door to Armageddon – and then she withdrew it and wiped a tear from her eye, closing the case that held death beyond imagination. No, it was not the innocent men women and children held captive by the Communist government that would pay, but some way, some day, those who ordered and carried out this despicable murder would meet their fate. Quietly, as if the ghost of John Richmond was standing before her, she uttered, “John, I will avenge your death, and I will make you proud that you chose me as your vice president.”

President Price sat thinking of those terrible first 48 hours as commander in chief when the Senate majority leader and the Speaker of the House entered and sat in the two blue leather chairs that faced her. Cordelier Price’s light brown, almond-shaped eyes usually held lightness to them along with her pleasant smile, but that day they flashed daggers at the two individuals who were now facing her.

“Mister Speaker, Congresswoman Feinman, I’ve just finished a letter of condolence to Major Roy Jackson’s family, and I will be leaving tomorrow to attend a memorial service for him. I think it’s harder on his family and the family of Colonel Schevyenskey to know what’s left of their loved one’s bodies will continue to circle the Moon for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Their grief will be without closure. *And*, I have you two *leaders* to thank for that. When we conclude our discussions here today, I will be calling the Russian President to try and justify why, against my better judgment, I went along with your committee’s recommendation not to place defensive

weapons on the moon station. And, I might add that several of your committee members seemed more concerned about preserving the interests of certain corporations with ties to the Chinese than the interests of America.”

Senator James Carey was the first to speak, but he shifted in his chair, and his eyes would not meet those of Cordelier Price. “Madam President, we acted within the scope of international law and the 1967 Treaty of Outer Space. It was our conviction that the United States and our Russian partners, of course, would not violate that treaty.”

“Even though you *knew* from intelligence analysis that the Chinese had in fact placed offensive weapons on the Moon?”

Senator Carey again averted his eyes, looking everywhere but directly at the president. “We...we’ve heard that tune before...weapons of mass destruction that didn’t exist, overinflated intelligence estimates...we ...we can’t be expected to...”

Before he could finish, Congresswoman Feinman spoke. “Madam President, I’ve seen the Chinese report; they say a meteor hit the spacecraft...I’ve even seen their images of it. You can’t hold our party and the Chinese responsible for their deaths!”

Cordelier Price had to press her hands together, compose herself, and steady her anger but still some of it rose to the surface. “Congresswoman, are you so *gullible* to actually believe that line of crap the Chinese handed us, or are you just wishing it was true to assuage your guilt for sending those brave men to their deaths?”

Reaching into an envelope on her desk, Cordelier Price pulled out a series of three 8x10 photo images. “These were captured by a surveillance satellite in geosynchronous orbit at an extreme angle of about 120 degrees to the orbit of the Moon. The Chinese didn’t know about our little snooper, which did manage to capture this.” She handed the images to Donna Feinman. “That streak of light at the very edge of the Moon’s disk is the exhaust plume of a Chinese rocket being launched from their base. As you can see in the last image, there’s an explosion that is partially hidden by the Moon but clearly visible against

the blackness of space. Now, this is classified information, because if this gets out to the public, I may be forced to issue a declaration of war. We have no idea as to what the ultimate goals of the Chinese are, but we're not going to play our hand until we find out. Now, I am about to have a very difficult discussion with President Simonov, and I am going to assure him that the next joint mission, should he even agree to another joint mission, *will* carry a full complement of both offensive and defensive weapons... Do I make myself clear? And, one more thing, you are not to discuss *anything* concerning the *real* truth behind the loss of the space station. This is now a matter of national security, and I'm certain you are aware of the consequences involved with releasing any of this information. However, on a more personal note, you're both up for re-election. I believe your constituents would find it extremely troubling that you placed your desire not to offend the Chinese over the lives of those men. Now, please ... if you will excuse me, I have work to do."

Cordelier Price did not look up from her desk as the two opposition leaders left the Oval Office.

### ***Moscow: 22:30 hours: Office of the President in the Kremlin***

President Victor Simonov closed the spigot on a golden samovar that had at one time belonged to Czar Nicolas himself and returned to his ornately carved executive desk. He eyed his three advisors and the Russian Foreign Minister that faced him in dark red and gold trimmed chairs. President Simonov had ascended the ladder of power in Russia and won the presidency of the Russian Federation in 2015 by two means: his quick wit backed up with a keen intellect, and his great wealth. These assets helped put in place the first Russian president since Boris Yeltsin with a true commitment to broadening democracy. Victor Simonov was a "New Russian" who, as a young man, had taken full advantage of his county's break with communism to make a fortune in Caspian Sea oil development. From there, he parlayed his money into the international export market and a newly invigorated banking

system in Russia. He had made a clean break with his predecessors with a policy of working with, rather than against, Western interests to build a better future for his country. Today, at age fifty-six, just slightly more than a year after the one-hundredth anniversary of the 1917 revolution, Simonov stood at the pinnacle of power of a new Russian capitalist dynamo that supplanted the rotting communist system. His future and that of his country and the world looked bright until July 20, 2017, when what nearly everyone in the aerospace and intelligence community “knew” to be a Chinese space station suddenly fired up its rocket motors and set a course for the Moon.

The date of July 20, the anniversary of the first moon landing, was chosen by the Peoples Republic of China to rub the American’s noses in the fact that it was China, not the United States, who had returned to the Moon first. To make matters worse, in violation of the 1967 Treaty of Outer Space, the Chinese claimed the lunar South Pole ice fields as sovereign territory and set up a base that some suspected had a military component. That suspicion was confirmed 48 hours before with the destruction of the joint U.S./Russian moon station sent to begin countering Chinese domination of the Moon and to establish a competing colony and the deaths of its crew, American Major Roy Jackson and Russian Colonel Nicolai Schevyenskey.

President Simonov’s steel gray eyes scanned the room, taking in the details of his advisors. Director Yevghenny Pavlovitch Golovko of the FSB, the Russian intelligence agency, spoke first. “It is my opinion and that of my colleagues in the FSB that we abandon this ridiculous cooperation with the Americans and go our own way to establish a Russian national moon base. Agreeing to forego defensive weapons on the mission because of arm-twisting by the American Congress over our wheat purchases not only cost the life of Colonel Schevyenskey, but also destroyed one of the four remaining Salyut stations in our inventory. What did you tell the American *woman* when you spoke, that this was the end of our cooperation? Are you so captivated by her charms or is it just her mastery of the Russian language?”

Simonov narrowed his eyes and fired back. “There is no hard evidence that this was an attack on our lunar space station, so I am not certain defensive weapons would have prevented this, although, the Chinese explanation of a meteor strike does seem to strain credulity. This accident also took the life of an American major, as you well know. I met him and his wife at Star City when he was training. He was a good man. Secondly, you will not refer to the American President as *that woman*. Yes, she is charming and yes, she does speak our language better than half of our own citizens, but behind her smile are teeth of steel. She stood nearly alone and forced the Chinese back from Taiwan while still reeling from the murder of her friend, President Richmond, a man who I will remind you diverted an American aircraft carrier to our aid in Vladivostok when the People’s Republic of China decided to reclaim some of their so-called *lost territory*. And, lastly as head of the FSB, how do you explain that *you* never suspected the Chinese space station was in fact a cover for a moon landing or ever voiced *your* concerns before our moon station’s destruction?” The Russian President tossed a slightly worn paperback book to Golovko.

“I’m sorry Mister President; I do not read the English language,” Golovko said.

“Then let me explain it to you. This is a book of fiction written a number of years ago that predicted this very event. Perhaps we should replace your intelligence agents with writers of fantasy.”

Yuri Zhdanov, director of the Russian Space Agency spoke up. “Even if we wanted to go our separate ways with the Americans, we cannot. Yes, we still have three Salyuts and any number of Soyuz spacecraft, but we do not have the Antares Space Tug to get the Salyut to the Moon, nor do we have any lunar landers or the deployable habitats to set in place on the Moon. We have half the resources, and the Americans have the other half...but...I have been speaking to my counterpart in Germany. The ESA wants participation in a moon base and will provide money, personnel, and most importantly crew modules for much larger missions. I think we must all agree to be pragmatic and

put aside a bit of our nationalist pride. The Americans must as well, because right now China owns the Moon and by virtue of her claim, China can dictate to Russia, America, and the entire world just what we can and cannot do in space. I think this threat far outweighs any prideful egos we may all have. And, if I may respectfully add, do not be too hard on Director Golovko. The Chinese were masterful at their deception. I'm certain the American President is having a very unpleasant talk with her own CIA chief right now."

Wearing a dark green uniform festooned with medals, Marshal Nevsky, commander of the Russian strategic missile forces, leaned forward in his chair. "The Chinese caught us...caught all of us – Russians, Americans, the ESA – with our pants down. It happened before in 1941 when Stalin turned a deaf ear to those who were screaming that the Germans were preparing to invade the *Rodina*. We didn't listen then, and we didn't listen now; neither did the Americans to a *troublemaker* within their own astronaut corps. The former American Air Force Major John McGovern tried warning the world that this was exactly what would happen. He paid a price for his vision and honesty; NASA relieved him of his flight duties. After that, he resigned. I have his file here, if you would care to review it, Mister President."

Simonov reached across his desk, plucking the red folder from the marshal's hand and opened it. Looking back at him from an 8x10 photograph were the light blue eyes of John McGovern. He was a man with short-cropped sandy brown hair and a smile of self-confidence. Obviously, this photograph was taken before he had been bounced from the NASA program, for he was in his flight suit. The Russian President continued to scan the page, speaking quietly to himself. "Born in Stamford, Connecticut 1977, entered the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado, 1995, flew combat missions during the Iraq War, joined NASA in 2011, served on board the International Space Station twice and then was relieved of flight duties two years ago for spreading alarm about the motives behind Chinese activities in Earth orbit." One

other piece of information: divorced fifteen months ago, shortly after resigning from NASA.

Simonov's eyes fell on the transcript of a speech McGovern had made. "Let me read his comments to a congressional commission on the future of space exploration, the conference he was specifically told not to address:

*"America today is once again about to commit the grave error of underestimating our enemies. We let it happen to us in 1941 when we dismissed the Japanese as an ineffective military power. We did it again on September 11, 2001, when we were still treating terrorists as criminals rather than the desperate fanatics they actually are, and so again we paid the price for our insular views. Today, we are about to make the same foolish error. Remember, China is not a friend to America. China has designs on economic and military domination of the world. They have been thwarted at every turn here on Earth, but the Chinese are pragmatic, patient and inventive. If they cannot dominate and project their power here on Earth, they will do so from space. The entire thrust of their claimed civil space program is in reality a carefully planned military operation. It is my firm belief that China's ultimate goal is to seize the resources of the Moon: that is, the frozen water beneath the lunar South Pole. This will afford them unlimited supplies of both fuel and oxygen to establish a trans-lunar space force and essentially chain the United States and the world's other space-faring nations to our planet. Should we then be permitted to engage in our own uses of space, it would be only with China's permission and only under their ever-watchful eyes. Ladies and gentlemen of this committee, I urge you to fund an emergency development program to establish our own moon base at the earliest possible opportunity. The freedom of the United States, as well as the world, hangs in the balance. We cannot call ourselves the land of the free with Chinese overlords staring down upon us and dictating to us as to what we are and what we are not permitted to do..."*

Simonov closed the folder, squared his muscular shoulders in his chair and then addressed the men in the room. "We Russians know how to come from behind. Peter the Great knew it, and we proved it in 1941 when we were nearly defeated by the Germans. We proved it again by placing the first satellite and then the first man in space. This

time, the stakes are much higher, and the penalty for failure far greater. I've read your reports, and I have done my own research. If the Chinese remain unopposed and unchallenged to their claim of the lunar ice fields, then the entire world is held captive. We are essentially shut off from access to the planets and to the resources of the asteroid belt, and even our own space stations and communications satellites are in jeopardy. Right now, China holds the high ground, and we are left unprepared to stake our own claim to these resources. By the grace of God, we still have the Salyuts, the Americans are pushing ahead with their new lunar landers, and now we can expect cooperation from the European Space Agency. For now, this may be an alliance of convenience, but I believe this is our collective future, not to be thrown away as it was after 1945. I am going to call President Price back as soon as we conclude our meeting, and I am going to insist that this man of theirs, John McGovern, be placed in a command position of the next joint mission to the Moon. I believe his courage and his foresight has given him that right. President Price has assured me the next moon station will be fully armed and will be not only able to defend itself but to attack if necessary. Russia will never again be under the thumb of the Mongols as we were so many hundreds of years ago. If we need the help of others to remain free this time, then so be it."

The Russian President turned to his Foreign Minister and his friend. "Anton Sergeiavich, as soon as time permits, please make arrangements to meet with the principal ministers of the ESA nations to begin integrating their programs with ours. Now, it's late. I will place my call to President Price and then turn in for the night. *Spakonia Noche*, gentlemen."

As the men stood up and walked toward the door, Simonov caught the arm of his Foreign Minister and quietly spoke to him. "Anton Sergeiavich, do not leave just yet. I have something to discuss with you."

"Yes Victor Andreavich, what is it?"

Simonov waited until the last man, Marshal Nevsky, shut the door

before speaking. "Sit down Anton. I have something to say to you, now that we are alone." President Victor Simonov withdrew a small key from his suit coat pocket and opened a door on his ornate gold trimmed desk. Reaching in, he withdrew three photographs and handed them to his long time friend.

The Foreign Minister shuffled through them and with a puzzled look turned to Simonov. "Forgive me, Victor, but what is it I am looking at? These appear to be telescopic images of the Moon, is that correct?"

"*Da*, they arrived by courier directly from Washington this afternoon, to my personal attention, bypassing the FSB and even your ministry personnel." A look of confusion crossed the Foreign Minister's face. Before he could form a question, President Simonov continued. "These images were taken by an American satellite. This was no accident. Do you see the streak of light just above the edge of the Moon? That is a Chinese missile launch. The second photograph shows the fireball when it struck our Salyut. The American President had these delivered personally to me."

The Russian Foreign Minister stared at the images, turning each over in his hands thoughtfully before he spoke. "Victor, you did not say anything about this during our meeting; why is that?"

It had been a long day and Simonov rubbed his forehead before answering. "The tentacles of the Chinese are long, and I believe they run deep into the *Rodina*. The fewer people who are aware that I know the real truth behind *this accident*, the better. Of the all the men in this room tonight, I fully trust only you, and as for Golovko...I trust him the least. He hides all thoughts of his true intentions, and I do *not* like his eyes...yet...he is the Director of the Federal Security Bureau with powerful friends. I cannot have the man arrested on just my suspicions. However...if we follow one serpent, he may lead us right to the nest of vipers. Now, goodnight and let this information remain just between the two of us."

"*Da*, you have my word Victor Andreavich."

\* \* \* \*

The American Airlines MD-80 on landing approach descended though the heavy winter cloud cover that blanketed the city of Albany, New York. Former astronaut John McGovern felt the familiar tug of gravity, as if someone had just slammed on the brakes. In a sense they had; the pilot was slowing the jet for an instrument approach to the airport runway hidden below. The plane dropped through layers of cold gray clouds that seemed a perfect match to McGovern's mood. He was headed back to his Berkshire home in Great Barrington from a memorial service for his friend and fellow astronaut Roy Jackson. He and Major Jackson trained as a team, spending weeks working together aboard the International Space Station. They had even flown the final mission of the Space Shuttle Endeavour together before she was decommissioned and replaced with the new Orion launch system. McGovern was scheduled to take the new Orion up into orbit as her pilot, but just days prior to the launch he lost his flight certification. The official NASA explanation was flight fatigue, but John knew very well it was retaliation for speaking his mind to a congressional committee about the real danger China posed. Powerful people with vested economic interests in China made certain that astronaut John M. McGovern would be a former astronaut.

The pressures put on him after his address forced his resignation. He felt he had lost everything and in a sense, he had. Even his wife divorced him, citing his obsession with his imagined Chinese threat for ending his career and their life together. Only today, standing in the cold sunshine of the Colorado Springs Air Force Academy Cathedral, holding Roy Jackson's widow as she buried her head into his shoulder, soaking it with tears, did John know for certain he had been correct all the time. The only thing he couldn't figure out was why NASA, the White House and the media were buying into the pure bullshit of the Chinese explanation of a meteor strike that left his friend and a Russian cosmonaut orbiting the moon like ground up hamburger. What really galled him was the appearance of President Cordelier Price, surrounded

by a small army of secret service agents. When she spoke at the memorial, it was about the “accident” that took the life of Major Roy Jackson. John thought to himself that he used to have a lot of respect for this woman. *How the hell could she parrot the Chinese line about this being an accident?* This was no accident but a deliberate act of war.

Retrieving his winter topcoat and carry-on bag from the overhead compartment, McGovern maneuvered his slim but muscular frame down the narrow aisle and out the plane’s exit door. As he stepped into the jet bridge, two U.S. Air Force officers confronted him.

Before he could speak, the first man, a handsome African American, smiled and extended his hand. “Major McGovern, I’m Lieutenant Colonel Miles Brown, and this is Captain Emery. I’m very pleased to meet you, sir.”

McGovern looked the man over before extending his own hand and then spoke. “Excuse me, but it’s *former* Major McGovern; I resigned my commission after I was forced out of NASA. Why don’t you just call me John? And for the record, I’ve just had a very long and very difficult day, so if you’ll excuse me, I’ll be heading to the parking lot to go home.”

“Okay by me, John,” the man replied. “But with the way that snow’s coming down out there, maybe you ought to take your time about hitting the road. In fact, it would very much be my pleasure to buy you a drink and shoot the breeze for a while.”

“Listen, no offense Colonel, but since when did I develop a fan club in the Air Force that you two want to be my long lost pals? I just said goodbye to a very good friend and fellow astronaut today, and frankly I’m in no mood to be jovial.”

Lieutenant Colonel Brown reached into his jacket, withdrew an envelope with the seal of the President of the United States on it and placed it into John McGovern’s hand. McGovern took it, and turning it over examined the embossed presidential seal. It was the real thing all right.

“Major McGovern, the captain and I carry a high security clearance,

and while I don't know what exactly is in that letter from President Price, I do know that they want you back. Back in the air force and back at NASA. Yeah, you were right and we were wrong. That's what the captain and I were sent here to tell you. They want you back for something important. That's all I know."

Sliding his index finger into the opening, John McGovern ripped open the envelope and began reading:

*From the Office of the President of the United States, Cordelier Price, this eighth day of February 2018*

*Dear Major McGovern:*

*As President and Commander in Chief of the United States of America, I want to extend my sincere apology for the treatment you suffered for speaking your mind and trying to alert those of us in government to the danger the Chinese military space program posed. I would like to you to consider my offer to reinstate your rank as an active Air Force officer and to ask you as my fellow American citizen to consider leading a second mission to establish an international outpost on the Moon. Please consider this in the light of the destruction of our first attempt at placing a base on the moon by a Chinese missile. I am placing my confidence in you as a former military officer that you will not mention the fact that we know it was not a meteor but a Chinese offensive weapon that destroyed the lunar space station.*

*I urge you to consider this offer in the manner it has been presented. Your warnings as well as your suspicions of the Chinese space program have been vindicated. I would consider it a personal favor if you would accept this offer in the manner it has been given. Again, I offer my apologies and my regrets for any way your government has wronged you.*

*Sincerely,*

*Cordelier D. Price, President, United States of America*

McGovern held the letter for a long time, reading it a second time with

a tumult of emotions forcing their way to the surface. Anger was the first of these to break free, and he nearly ripped the letter to pieces until the sense of vindication washed over him. He was still torn in two directions, with feelings of relief that he was finally being taken seriously and a desire for revenge now at war upon the battlefield of his mind when the Lieutenant Colonel again spoke.

“One more piece of information you should know Major: Jason Cumbers is out as Director of NASA, or at least he will be by sunrise. President Price is appointing former astronaut Norman Taggart as the new director. I believe that you and he have a great deal of mutual respect for each other. So, what do you say Major? Are you back on board?”

McGovern’s eyes met Brown’s as he took the measure of the man. *Wow*, he thought, *they’re bringing back Norman as director? His support for me nearly killed his own career.* “Colonel, I’ll have to sleep on it, but I will have a decision for you by early tomorrow morning. Yeah, it’s still snowing pretty hard, so maybe I’ll put up for the night at the Airport Hyatt. I won’t be driving anywhere tonight. That being the case, I’ll take you and the captain up on that offer for a drink. God knows, right now I think I need one.”

One drink turned into a few more with John McGovern and the other two Air Force officers sharing war stories late into the evening. Morning dawned clear and cold with the sun reflecting of the blindingly white snow that had fallen the evening before, highlighted by a deep sapphire blue sky. A knock on McGovern’s hotel door brought him back from the view out his window. Opening the door, he again faced the Lieutenant Colonel.

“Major McGovern, I have a call for you on this encrypted cell phone...It’s the President, sir.”

McGovern took the phone.

Brown could only hear one side of the conversation: “Yes, I read your letter. Yes...thank you very much. Really? I didn’t know that. Well, yes I would be very happy to meet with you and Norman but no

promises. Today? I think I'll need a change of clothes...Oh? I see. Okay then, I'll see you later today ... and ... thank you. It feels good to know someone is finally taking me seriously, but I feel terrible about the loss of those men. Yes, I agree. It must not happen again. And, I owe you an apology as well. I was at the memorial for Major Jackson when you spoke. I... really thought that you bought the Chinese story about a meteor. Yes, I agree, better to have them thinking they put one over on us. I'll see you then...and thank you."

With that, John McGovern broke the connection and returned the phone to Lieutenant Colonel Brown. "It seems I have a supporter from an unusual source. Russian President Simonov insisted that I be asked to head up a second space mission. Ah...I need to go out and grab a change of clothes somewhere. All I have is what I was wearing back from Colorado."

"No problem about that sir, I have your majors uniform right here."

"Wait a minute, since when does a superior officer start calling me *sir* and bringing me my uniform?"

A smile broke across Brown's face along with a chuckle. "Well, sir, your rank of major is just temporary until you get to Washington. If you decide to take the president up on her offer, you'll be a full bird colonel by this time tomorrow, and you'll be *my* superior officer. And, no need to make flight arrangements, the captain and I will take you over to Stewart Air Force Base. There's a Gulfstream jet waiting to fly you down to Andrews for your meeting with the president...unless you'd rather strap into the back seat of an F-15-B?"

McGovern just shook his head. "No, a Gulfstream would be just fine. Let me get showered and changed, and we'll hit the road, okay?"

### ***Beijing China, Office of Space Intelligence***

It was a cold cloudless night with the nearly full moon shining down on streets, icy and wet from melting snow. The harsh glare from the mercury vapor lights overhead cast a glossy green sheen on the asphalt walkway leading to the office of Space Intelligence. Sung Zhao, his

short-cropped hair still jet-black despite his fifty-one years, pulled the collar of his leather coat to close it more securely against the icy fingers of the winter's night trying to claw their way in. Zhao turned his head upward to gaze for a moment at the Moon, its light bathing his face and revealing a long, ugly scar that ran from just under his right eye to his chin. As a young intelligence agent, he had been unlucky enough to be within range of an errant piece of metal that sliced through the air at several hundred feet per second during the test of an explosive device that Zhao had helped design. The shard of aluminum buried itself in his right cheek, just missing his eye by millimeters, and disfiguring his face. It had been Zhao's plan that the device was tested for, but he would hear about its success or failure second hand from a hospital bed.

It was 1996, and the Americans like naive children had brought their Lovell Intelsat to China to be launched on a Long March rocket. The American team was to make certain that the highly sensitive technology of the satellite's guidance system was not accessed by any Chinese personnel. Zhao, a young intelligence officer, had different ideas. Through his perseverance and persistence with his superiors, they allowed him to put his plan in motion: Place an explosive device at just the right spot in the Long March to ensure its destruction without damaging the satellite. It had to be at just the right altitude. Too soon and the pieces would fall back to the launch pad for easy recovery of the satellite by the American team. Too late and there would be little of value left to salvage if anything at all. Zhao's device was set for 22 seconds after launch. The debris would fall on a village directly in the flight path of the rocket and likely kill hundreds, but Zhao and his superiors felt this to be a trivial matter next to the goal of obtaining the Lovell guidance system.

On February 15, 1996, the motors ignited on the Long March rocket as gouts of flame enveloped the launch pad thrusting the craft upward into a cold deep blue sky. At 22 seconds after launch, that sky erupted in an angry red fireball, blasting the rocket to pieces and sending flaming fuel and metal raining down on the nearby village, taking more

than 500 lives. The crash site was declared strictly off-limits to the Americans for safety reasons, while a specially equipped Chinese team went in to salvage what they could of the payload. The next day, the charred and battered remains of the Intelsat was handed over to the Americans. When questioned about one hexagonal blue anodized component that was conspicuously absent, the salvage team leader just shook his head saying what they brought back was all they could find.

Two days later, as Sung Zhao lay in his hospital bed, his face swathed in bandages, two stern-faced high-ranking military officers entered his room and stood over him. Suddenly a smile broke across the face of one of the officers as he handed Zho a hexagonal device about fifteen inches long made of blue anodized aluminum. Despite the pain from the contraction of his ruined facial muscles, Zhao broke into a grin. Finally, China had gained an advanced American-made guidance system. Once their scientists could reverse engineer it, the device would be incorporated into a new generation of Chinese ICBMs. No longer would their rockets carry just a single nuclear warhead: now each instrument of destruction could carry up to eight independently targeted 250 kiloton nuclear warheads with an accuracy of less than a dozen meters to their selected targets. Sung Zhao, at the young age of twenty-nine, was hailed as a brilliant intelligence officer. Twenty-two years later, Zhao was again the driving force of a bold plan to claim the resources of the Moon and make certain that no nation but China would dominate space.

Zhao again looked up at the Moon, knowing his men, equipment, and weapons were in place on its cratered surface. His plan was just beginning to unfold. He returned his gaze to his office door, opened it, and entered to find the Chinese Vice Premier as well as the commander of the Chinese strategic missile forces waiting for him. It would be a long night as Zhao's plans unfolded and captured the imagination of two of the highest ranking Communist Party members of the People's Republic of China.

He bowed as a matter of respect to his superiors; however, Zhao, as

well as the two ranking men in the room, knew that in this matter it was Sung Zhao who was in command. This was the greatest opportunity that had ever been presented to China to enhance its position as the dominant world power.

Vice Premier Gao Xi spoke first. “Zhao, your plan appears to be successful even beyond your first estimation. With the destruction of the Russian-American moon station, you have disrupted their program and sown the seeds of mistrust between the two nations. Perhaps you have derailed their efforts permanently or at least delayed them for many months. So then, what is the next move?”

“Before I answer that Vice Premier Gao and General Chen, I wish to assure you that apparently both the American and the Russians have accepted our explanation of the destruction of their craft as an accident. No fingers of blame save for a few discredited troublemakers point at China and those who have expressed doubts are not taken seriously.”

General Chen, heavy set and balding, spoke up. “I had some reluctance and apprehension about your plan, but I can see now the destruction of their craft was done in such a manner so that no evidence of our involvement was discovered. The West and the Russians may have their suspicions but have nothing to confirm it was our missile that ended their mission. You have my complete confidence, Zhao. Now tell us about the next phase of your plan.”

Zhao smiled with self-assurance, even if only the left half of his mouth turned up. The damage to the right half of his face had permanently severed muscles and nerves in such a way to make that side immobile. “By sowing havoc within the ranks of the Americans and the Russians, we have a window of opportunity to reinforce and expand our moon base without interference, and due to its location, without observation. We have scheduled three launches, each a day apart to bring added military personnel and new prefabricated sections for the expansion of our base. In addition, we have added extra weapons to increase our security. However, the next phase of my plan is one of humanitarian assistance and China’s promise of nearly

unlimited riches from space for the struggling nations of the Third World. We will build a manufacturing and transport system on the Moon to process the titanium, aluminum and rare earths that are abundant in the lunar soil with a solar furnace. With the use of a magnetic accelerator, we will send the processed materials back to Earth orbit. There, we will affix the packages of processed metals with re-entry shields to deliver them to the many struggling and resource poor nations of the world, earning China their loyalty and assuring world opinion will favor us and not the Americans or the Europeans or the Russians.

“The next phase will also include a demonstration of both China’s technical prowess as well as our generosity. In less than four weeks, a very important resource and communications satellite in orbit over the African continent will suddenly cease to function, leaving the Pan-African nations desperate to replace it for financial data, crop, water current and weather data. The West will of course launch a replacement – for a price, however. Shortly after lift-off, the American craft will experience a catastrophic launch accident. China, will not only replace the African satellite at no cost, but we will assemble and deliver that satellite to geosynchronous orbit from our facilities on the Moon, as a demonstration of our technological superiority over all other nations. With good will and the riches of the Moon flowing to the non-aligned Third World, China will not have to fight for domination of space: We will be handed that position on a silver platter.”

General Chen nodded thoughtfully but then added, “We are certain the Americans with Russian assistance will not give up so easily and try again to establish their own claim the ice fields?”

“Do not worry, General,” replied Zhao. “That contingency has already been planned for. If, and when, the Americans launch, it will result in a *catastrophic malfunction*, in the words of NASA. Come closer gentlemen, and I shall enlighten you on the specifics of the plan. To execute it, we shall require the resources of a very specific military branch, but I think you will agree the plan is foolproof.”

# TERMINOLOGY USED IN *RED MOON*

Airborne Laser: carried on a Boeing 747-400, first flown 2002. Range to target approx. 180 miles.

Altair Lander: NASA-proposed lunar lander for a 2020 return to the Moon. Crew capacity: 4.

Ares-I: NASA: built by Boeing and Alliant Techsystems, to carry the Orion capsule.

Ares-V: NASA proposed heavy-lift launch vehicle to carry the EDS (Earth Departure Stage).

Baikonur Cosmodrom, Kazakhstan: primary launch facility for the Russian Space Program.

Bigelow Aerospace: founded by Robert Bigelow in 1999. Commercial space development and inflatable commercial space stations.

EDS (Earth Departure Stage) NASA: proposed lunar stage for NASA's return to the Moon program, Constellation. Cryonic fuel (liquid oxygen–liquid hydrogen).

ESA: European Space Agency.

Falcon-9: built by Space-X, commercial launch vehicle, first flown in 2010.

Grumman Aerospace (Northrop–Grumman), Falls Church, Va.: Contractor for the design and manufacture of the Apollo Lunar Lander - the LEM.

Klipper: proposed, Russian-built, reusable space plane.

LEM (Lunar Excursion Modules), on display in museums, number and location:

LM-2- Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, Washington, DC

LM-9- Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral, FL

LM-13-Cradle of Aviation Museum, Garden City, NY

LM-14-Franklin Institute Display, Philadelphia, PA

PLA (People's Liberation Army): the Chinese military, air, land, sea, and space.

Plesetsk Cosmodrom: Northern Russian launch facility, established in 1957.

Proton Rocket: (UR-500): Russian heavy-lift rocket. (First flight 1966), 22 tons to orbit.

Salyut Space Station: early Russian space stations in use from 1971-1982: A Salyut-7 space station with a Soyuz and a Progress spacecraft attached sits in front of the Hotel Kosmos, in Moscow, Russia.

Seawolf Class Submarine: US Navy fast attack submarine: *USS Connecticut*, launched 1998.

Sergei Korolev (b.1907- d.1966): Born in Zhytomyr, Russian Empire (now Ukraine). Founder of the Soviet Space Program.

Sky Striker-An SDI particle-beam weapon designed to destroy suborbital and orbital threats. Sky Striker is the creation of the author based upon the best available information on current military development of such defensive weapons.

Soyuz TMA Spacecraft: Russian, 3-man Earth to orbit spacecraft. First flown in 1967.

Star City-Gagarin training center, Moscow: Northern Moscow Region cosmonaut training center.

Titan IV Heavy Lift Rocket: built by Lockheed–Martin, used for deep space missions.

Type-094 Chinese Jin Class Ballistic Missile Submarine: carries 12 DF-31 long range MIRVed nuclear missiles (4-250KT warheads per missile).

Ural Night Wolf: Ural Motorcycle, Co. Irbit, Russia. Factory custom motorcycle, 750cc opposed twin.

Xichang Spaceport, China: PLA and the Chinese Space Program's primary launch center.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Chris Berman** is the author of the popular *The Hive* and *Red Moon* books, both of which Leo has reissued from their original publisher.

Berman grew up reading science fiction novels and stories and began writing his own towards the end of 2007, after a bicycle accident. Chris's writing defies a set style, creating novels of hard science fiction, techno-thrillers, and alternate history—with each work of fiction, a unique literary adventure. He holds a Master's Degree in military history and is a member of the Society for Military History. Berman has an extensive background in spaceflight and astronomy. Chris Berman lives in Florida with his wife and daughters.