

MAJOR GENERAL CHARLES F. BOLDEN JR. '68, USMC (RET.)

Raised in segregated South Carolina, Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr. '68, USMC (Ret.), refused to let a lack of support from his congressional representatives deter him from attending the Naval Academy. He earned his appointment from an Illinois congressman. He excelled at the Academy as a boxer, in the Glee Club, as 11th Company commander and as the Class of 1968's first president, also serving as one of a few midshipmen working directly with the Superintendent to increase diversity at the Academy. A positive experience with his plebe year company officer drew General Bolden to the Marine Corps, where he was designated an aviator in 1970. After flying 100 combat missions over North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in the A-6A Intruder, General Bolden returned to the States and spent two years as a recruiting officer, later earning a master's degree in systems management from the University of Southern California.

A gifted aviator who would amass more than 6,000 flight hours throughout his career, General Bolden soon became a test pilot and was selected for the astronaut program in 1980. He would spend 14 years in the NASA astronaut corps, logging 680 hours in space on four shuttle missions—two as pilot and two as mission commander. After his final shuttle flight in 1994, General Bolden resumed his Marine Corps service with an assignment as Deputy Commandant of Midshipmen just as the Academy was responding to the cheating scandal that had unfolded two years earlier. General Bolden embraced the opportunity to instill a sense of pride and responsibility in the Brigade. Later assignments included Assistant Wing Commander, 3rd Marine Air Wing; Deputy Commanding General, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force; Commanding General, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD); Deputy Commander, U.S. Forces Japan; and Commander, 3rd Marine Air Wing. Following his retirement from the Marine Corps in 2002, General Bolden served as a senior vice president at Tech Trans International until 2005 and then spent several years as CEO of a privately held military and aerospace consulting firm.

Nominated by Barack Obama to serve as 12th NASA Administrator, General Bolden rejoined the agency at a critical time. His eight-year tenure included the phase out of the space shuttle, the launch of a new era of exploration based on the International Space Station and the start of rocket and spacecraft programs that could carry astronauts to Mars by the 2030s. This period brought the launch of the JUNO spacecraft to Jupiter, Mars CURIOSITY rover, NEW HORIZONS mission to Pluto and progress toward the introduction of the James Webb Space Telescope, successor to Hubble. For five consecutive years during Bolden's tenure, NASA was ranked the best place to work among large federal agencies, and applications to the astronaut program reached an all-time high Bolden's final year as Administrator.

General Bolden continues to devote time, talent and support to the Naval Academy, where he has delivered Forrestal Lectures, chairs the annual Astronaut Convocation and serves as a member of the Naval Academy Foundation Board of Directors. He and his wife, Alexis, live in Alexandria, VA, and have two grown children, including Lieutenant Colonel A. Ché Bolden '93, USMC, and Dr. Kelly Bolden, MD.



"Throughout his enormously accomplished career, General Charlie Bolden was an astute, dynamic leader with uncommon technical expertise and a sincere commitment to the welfare of the men and women under his charge, as well as their families."

—General James L. Jones, USMC (Ret.)
32nd Commandant
United States Marine Corps