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### Shuttle Columbia Report Released | BUZZ ALDRIN INTERVIEW

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**PAULA ZAHN**, CNN ANCHOR: The Columbia Accident Investigation Board issued its final report today. In the words of one of the board members -- quote -- "The foam did it." But the report also blames the space agency's internal structure and what it calls NASA's culture of invincibility. It goes on to warn, if these flaws are not resolved -- quote -- "The scene is set for another accident."

Joining me now is former astronaut Buzz Aldrin. For those of you who might be too young to understand what Buzz did, he flew on Gemini 12 and on Apollo 11, when he and Neil Armstrong became the first men to walk on the moon.

It's always a pleasure to see you. Welcome.

**BUZZ ALDRIN**, FORMER NASA ASTRONAUT: Nice to see you, Paula.

**ZAHN**: Let's talk a little bit about some of the allegations in this report.

One of the more scathing parts of the report came when the board basically said, effective checks and balances do not have to have an independent safety program and has not demonstrated the characteristics of a learning organization. It went on to say that these changes will be very difficult to accomplish and that they will be resisted from the inside.

**ALDRIN**: Yes. There's inertia in any organization that has been around for a while. It's called sort of a bureaucracy. And it has grown that way, I'm sorry to say, a good bit gradually in the last 30 years. We've not really had a national mandate for humans in space that can inspire people. So the interest, the enthusiasm has waned a good bit, the support from the Congress, from the administration in several different administrations.

So a lot of the talented people have migrated elsewhere. They're still a vibrant organization and it's still managing things. But it has grown somewhat complacent, I'm sure, in the way that it did leading up to Challenger. And I'm not surprised that that may have led, in many ways...

**ZAHN**: In fact, the report specifically says this, that there were echoes of what led to the Challenger explosion.

**ALDRIN**: Well, that just points out how difficult it is to really change any organization of people. And that's where leadership and inspiration really comes from.

**ZAHN:** Well, let's talk about how this report very specifically criticized NASA leadership. It said, "There was ineffective leadership that failed to fulfill the implicit contract to do whatever is possible to ensure the safety of the crew."

**ALDRIN:** Well, those are pretty precise and hard words. It's hard to always adhere to the letter of each of those that you talked about. You do the best you can in all the different tasks that people have. And I'm sure that they would say that they regret things that were not done that could have been done and they would like to have done things that they didn't get a chance to, whether it's above or below this -- some of this miscommunication.

**ZAHN:** Based on what you're saying and based on the briefing that you got, do you really believe the stage is set for another accident, as this report painfully pointed out?

**ALDRIN:** I think you could always say that the next flight could have an accident. Maybe - they have pointed out some of the events that could happen in one section of the report, where they looked at other issues.

But I was happy to see that they did look at the future and made some observations about how soon we should retire the orbiter. We feel the orbiter is the aging part of the shuttle system. The rest of the launch vehicle is very capable. And we need a heavy-lift vehicle if we're going to ever go beyond low Earth orbit.

So that's why my band of brothers, my band of consultants, have been looking at using a shuttle-derived launch vehicle and an eight-person crew module. We call it Project Aquila. And we think that that could rejuvenate a great deal of enthusiasm and be something that the Congress and the administration could focus toward.

**ZAHN:** Well, we'll be following that from here, as I stargaze off your tie. Nice tie, by the way.

**ALDRIN:** Thank you.

**ZAHN:** Are you going to be doing any Mars gazing? (CROSSTALK)

**ALDRIN:** I know. I have to look over Century City. There's not too clear a sky.

**ZAHN:** We figured you would be probably one of the few people in our audience to know exactly how to train your eyes on Mars. But for the folks who aren't as educated as you are in spacial matters, we're going to help them out a little bit later.

**ALDRIN:** Well, I saw Neil downstairs. And he and I put in a lot of time with the Commission on the Future of U.S. Aerospace Industry.

**ZAHN:** Well, good of you to join us.

**ALDRIN:** Thank you so much.

**ZAHN:** Always a pleasure, Buzz Aldrin.