



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairman Don Beyer (D-VA)
of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing:
*Keeping Our Sights on Mars Part 3: A Status Update and Review of NASA's
Artemis Initiative*

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Before we get underway, I want to take a moment to raise what is in the back of all of our minds, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and its implications for our civil space activities. According to media reports, NASA has stated that it “continues working with all our international partners, including the State Space Corporation Roscosmos, for the ongoing safe operations of the International Space Station.” I am encouraged by that and by the fact that the International Space Station partnership has been successfully preserved through periods of geopolitical stress in the past, and that sustaining its safe and productive operation has always been a focus of the partnership. That said, this Subcommittee will continue to monitor the situation and seek updates from NASA, as needed.

Turning now to the hearing, good morning, and welcome to today’s hearing titled “Keeping Our Sights on Mars Part 3: A Status Update and Review of NASA’s Artemis Initiative”. At this time, I’d also to extend a warm welcome to our panel of distinguished witnesses. Thank you for being here. Before I continue, I want to take a moment to recognize the Artemis I team at Kennedy Space Center. They are working hard to prepare for Artemis I—the first launch of the integrated Space Launch System with the Orion crew vehicle. This is an exciting and important milestone for Artemis, and we could not do it without them.

It’s been four years since former President Trump first announced a return to the Moon with humans—later naming the effort, “Artemis”. And it’s been nearly three years since former Vice President Pence accelerated the date for a moon landing by four years, to 2024. The Biden Administration is continuing Artemis, providing the important constancy of purpose for NASA’s long-term exploration initiative, an initiative that will span multiple Congresses and Administrations.

Today’s hearing will review NASA’s plans and progress on Artemis—the heavy-lift Space Launch System, the Orion crew vehicle, the ground systems, the space suits, the human landing system, the cislunar orbiting Gateway station, and the many other systems, payloads, and

operations that will support planned missions to the Moon in preparation for the next giant leap--being the first nation to land humans on the surface of Mars.

Our witnesses will discuss the status of Artemis and provide their perspectives on what is needed to make it successful. We need their wisdom and guidance, because by all accounts, Artemis is facing significant challenges. Advisory bodies, reviews, and audits are sounding warnings. Taken together, those warnings signal that the issues afflicting Artemis need serious attention by both Congress and the Administration.

Schedule delays and cost growth years in the making; a confusing mishmash of contract types; and untried approaches to organization and management are just a few of the concerns that have been raised.

Throughout its history, NASA has repeatedly shown that it can solve hard problems. The question before us today is are we willing...is NASA willing...to own the challenges, face them head-on, and undo any problematic decisions if necessary—that is, are both NASA and we in Congress prepared to take the actions that will be needed to lead Artemis to success? The answer must be a resounding “yes,” because I believe we have a unique opportunity in Artemis, if we chose to accept it. Bipartisan support is strong. The desire to explore deep space with humans once again is palpable. The chance to achieve is before us. What is missing are answers to the questions—what we are trying to accomplish and how we are going to do it? And what are our priorities?

Funding will not be unlimited and choices will need to be made. Are we establishing a sustainable lunar program of unlimited duration, or are we meeting milestones and defined objectives that feed forward to enable the Mars goal? Are we developing national capabilities needed for Moon to Mars or investing in commercial capabilities designed for objectives other than national needs? Is Artemis going to be a national program or disparate set of projects? Have we laid out a credible plan, approach, organization, and management structure, and identified the resources needed to implement it?

Everything...everything is dependent on having a clear and agreed-upon story of what we are doing, why, and how we will get there. More than four years into Artemis—the nation’s premier effort to lead America back to the Moon and on to Mars—I’m still looking for that narrative, something that I can tell my constituents, my family, my colleagues abroad, and my colleagues in here in Congress—especially appropriators.

Great nations do great things. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on what is needed to write an Artemis narrative that is worthy of our great nation.