

OPENING STATEMENT
By
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March 28, 2012

Good morning. I want to join Chairman Hall in welcoming all of our witnesses to today's hearing. In addition, I would like to express my appreciation in particular to one of those witnesses—Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Stafford—for his decades of service to this country and his *continuing* efforts to strengthen and promote the nation's civil and military aerospace capabilities.

As this Committee attempts to better understand the needs of our civil space program in these times of fiscal pressures, it is important to take a close look at one of the most important elements of the nation's human spaceflight program, namely, the International Space Station.

While the road to its completion has been a long one, with many twists and turns along the way, the ISS stands as one of the engineering marvels of the modern age, and a testament to American ingenuity and perseverance. There is a lot one could say about the ISS, but I think the citation that accompanied the award to the ISS team of the 2009 Collier Trophy—one of the aerospace profession's premier awards—sums up what has been accomplished. That is, *“the design, development, and assembly in space of the world's largest spacecraft, an orbiting laboratory, promising new discoveries for mankind and setting new standards for international cooperation in space.”*

I would go further, and also note that it is an accomplishment that has had great inspirational value for our young people, as evidenced by the intense interest of our students in talking to the orbiting astronauts and in developing science projects that might fly on the Station.

However, while we can talk about the promise offered by the ISS in enabling future space exploration as well as carrying out basic and applied research that can benefit life here on Earth, its success in fulfilling that promise is not assured. We will only realize its promise if NASA and Congress ensure that the necessary steps are taken to make the ISS a productive research facility and technology testbed, and that is what we need to address at today's hearing.

I understand the importance of trying to maintain uninterrupted access to the ISS, and I know that we will hear testimony today on some of the challenges in doing so. However, we should not forget that the purpose of cargo and crew transportation systems is to *support the utilization* of the ISS, not as ends in themselves.

The reality is that the ISS is a perishable commodity, and “the future is now” in terms of utilizing this unique facility. While some may hope to extend its agreed-upon service life past 2020, we need to make sure that the 8 years that remain till the current end of the ISS program are used effectively to answer the research and engineering questions that can only be answered on the ISS.

In short, we need clear, prioritized and integrated utilization plans from NASA, and we need to be assured that those plans are being carried out, both by NASA and by the independent ISS research management organization, CASIS, that was set up for that purpose. The former director of CASIS raised a number of serious concerns in her recent resignation letter, and this Committee will need to better understand what the situation at CASIS is, given its important role in ISS utilization.

As a result, Mr. Chairman, I hope that this Committee will convene another hearing before this Session of Congress is over to examine all of the issues faced by the research community in trying to utilize the ISS, as well as in carrying out related ground-based R&D. We need to hear from representatives of that

community in addition to the testimony we will get from the distinguished panel testifying before us today.

Before I close, I would just like to make one more point. Namely, if we want to ensure that the ISS carries out the needed research and technology activities in a timely and productive fashion, we have to be willing to make the needed investments. The ISS research budget is stagnating, and the agency's life and microgravity sciences budget has been cut deeply over the past decade. That does not seem to me to be a formula for success.

I am afraid that we get numb from the continued chipping away at NASA's accounts by both Congress and successive Administrations. However, those continued cuts have had a negative impact on NASA's ability to carry out its missions that we should not ignore. In spite of those negative impacts, the budget resolution that we will be voting on later this week would make *additional* cuts to the account that funds NASA and other R&D agencies. I hope that this Congress thinks twice before we embrace such cuts to an agency as important as NASA.

In closing, I again want to welcome our witnesses, and I look forward to your testimony. I yield back the balance of my time.