

OPENING STATEMENT

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Good morning, and welcome to our witnesses. I look forward to your testimony.

As my colleagues know, I am a strong supporter of NASA, both its science programs and its human spaceflight activities. I also am keenly interested in and excited by the entrepreneurial energy being devoted to human spaceflight these days. The passion of those working on commercial approaches to human spaceflight is infectious—and as I've said before, I'd love to fly into space myself someday!

That said, in my capacity as a Member of this oversight Committee, I have a responsibility to scrutinize *each* of NASA's major projects to make sure that they are well planned and executable. NASA's commercial crew program has to be subjected to that same level of oversight if we are doing our jobs on this Committee.

In that regard, I have to say that I am concerned that NASA is not holding that program to the same standard as its other major acquisitions. And make no mistake—this is a *major* acquisition for NASA. When the taxpayer is paying on average 9 out of every 10 dollars being spent to develop these commercial crew vehicles, we are not talking about a straightforward purchase of commercial services from the GSA list—these services don't even exist yet.

That said, I am puzzled and a bit frustrated that NASA appears to be unable or unwilling to acknowledge the warning signs that this major program is not on a firm path to success at present. In that regard, the written testimony of the Chair of the Aerospace Advisory Panel (ASAP), Admiral Dyer, is illuminating. While his prose is cautious and understated, it is hard not to read the concern couched in such statements as:

“Lacking an independent cost estimate, we are uncertain as to affordability.”

“However, we arrive at this point in time with designs that are maturing before requirements, and where government and industry have not yet agreed on how winning designs will be accepted and certified. We worry that the cart is ahead of the horse”, and

“NASA is just now undertaking to determine how systems will be certified to transport NASA astronauts. This timing increases programmatic risk and has serious potential to impact safety.”

To that I would add some of my own concerns, namely that not only do we not have an independent cost assessment to guide our congressional deliberations, we don't have any independent assessment of *when* these commercial systems will actually be able to start operational service to the International Space Station. NASA is saying “in the 2017 timeframe” in Mr. Gerstenmaier's testimony and even 2018 in one of its notional planning charts—and I would note that both of those dates are within just a few years of the currently scheduled end of Space Station operations—and years later than

originally promised. Moreover, both of those dates appear to be based on assumed funding levels for the commercial crew program that don't seem to bear much resemblance to what Congress has authorized or appropriated so far, or is likely to approve in the foreseeable future. If that's true, then I think we need NASA to give us a cost and schedule estimate that is based on more realistic budgetary assumptions, so we can see what is most likely to actually happen—something we require for all of NASA's other major programs.

In addition, NASA still has not given Congress a clear understanding of how much it will cost to fly our astronauts on these commercial systems. It is reported that NASA has had independent assessments that estimate that NASA's commercial crew seat costs are likely to be several times as high as Soyuz costs. Is that true? We need to know.

And finally, as alluded to in Admiral Dyer's testimony, NASA's latest approach to acquiring these commercial crew systems is, to put it charitably, "complex and unique". Trying to run Space Act Agreements in parallel to FAR-based contracts may be a "workaround", as the ASAP testimony phrases it, but that begs the question of why NASA didn't just stick to its *original* plan for FAR-based contracting.

Well, we have much to talk about today. As I close though, I would like to say that I deeply appreciate the service rendered to this Committee and to the nation on a continuing basis by the two gentlemen appearing before us today. You both have very hard jobs, and we appreciate your efforts.

Thank you, and with that I yield back the balance of my time.