



COMMITTEE ON

**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**

REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

## **Opening Statement of Ranking Member Brian Babin**

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

*March 1, 2022*

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our distinguished panel of witnesses. This hearing will provide Congress with an update on the status of the Nation's deep space exploration initiatives. This panel is uniquely positioned to provide that update.

One theme I expect to emerge from this hearing is agreement by all participants – members and witnesses - about the importance of continuity of purpose and design. Past space exploration programs have failed because of conflicting direction, uncertain goals, and unrealistic expectations.

We cannot afford to fail on the Artemis program. Maintaining progress through various Administrations and Congresses is critical for space exploration programs and our national competitiveness.

The Trump Administration made space exploration a priority and brought space policy back in line with the direction provided by Congress for over a decade. The result is the Artemis Program, dedicated to returning to the Moon and on to Mars and beyond.

The current Administration, to its credit, has stayed the course so far. Hopefully future budget requests will prioritize funding an expedited return to the Moon.

This effort is important to our national and economic security, as other nations like China seek to place a foothold on the Moon and gain a strategic advantage over us. The Moon is also a logical and achievable near-term goal that will enable future exploration of Mars.

There are many upcoming milestones and important issues related to the Artemis program that are critical for this Committee to monitor and oversee. In the next few weeks, we will hopefully see a successful launch of Orion atop the Space Launch System (SLS). SLS, Orion, and Exploration Ground Systems (EGS) are not just a rocket, but national capabilities that enable deep space exploration of the Moon, Mars, and the solar system.

SLS and Orion for Artemis 1 are at the Kennedy Space Center (KSC) awaiting a wet dress rehearsal before launch this spring, with core stages and capsules for later

Artemis missions well along in production. We are also in the early stages of developing a Human Landing System to deliver crew to the surface of the Moon. Another critical issue is the progress of advanced space suits to replace the aging ISS suits that allow for surface operations.

We also must ensure NASA has the technologies for communications, surface power, habitats, and surface vehicles that are necessary for a robust exploration program.

Finally, work on Gateway, in-space propulsion, and other long-term capabilities are also underway and are poised to enable a sustained exploration architecture.

As highlighted in the testimony we are hearing today, the novel approaches proposed for these acquisitions will require robust oversight and insight to ensure success. NASA has the correct goal, we are on the right path, but we are waiting on the right plan. As we will hear from our witnesses, there are still many details that NASA needs to provide.

We have no reliable cost for Artemis, no integrated master schedule for Artemis and its subcomponents, and no clarity on how the integration of elements such as Gateway, space suits, HLS, SLS, Orion, and EGS will happen, or who is responsible for ensuring ultimate success.

NASA's recent reorganization may be a step in the right direction, but many questions remain. The reorganization is very similar to the previous reorganization proposal from the Trump Administration, which was rejected by Congressional Democrats, only to be approved by them under this new Administration. Is NASA just rearranging deck chairs, or will it have a real impact? Is NASA's proposed phasing for the transition from development to operations appropriate and does it heed past safety warnings? I am sure we all have many more questions.

I am also confident we all have the same shared goal – a robust human spaceflight program. But, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details. We are still waiting on those details. I look forward to our witnesses' testimony and yield back the balance of my time.