



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

Opening Statement

**Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

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

March 1, 2022

Good morning. I'd like to join my colleagues in welcoming our witnesses to this morning's hearing. We have a lot to discuss.

As Chairman Beyer has noted, it is now more than four years since the previous Administration launched its Artemis Moon-Mars initiative. I have long supported a NASA exploration program directed towards the inspiring—but also incredibly challenging—goal of human missions to the Moon and then to Mars. I would like Artemis to succeed.

However, I am very concerned that more than four years after this program was announced, many of the fundamental concerns and questions raised by Members of this Committee since the start of Artemis still remain unresolved. For example:

More than four years after Artemis was started, NASA still has not established an overall architecture for the initiative, and NASA is now saying it hopes to have one by the *end* of the year.

More than four years after Artemis was started, NASA still has not developed the specific objectives that it is to pursue, or how they will fit together to support the goal of humans to Mars. NASA says it hopes to have them in the coming months.

More than four years after Artemis was started, no one appears to be in charge of the entire Artemis initiative. It is still largely a collection of individual projects rather than an integrated program managed by an empowered program manager, something that has been raised as a serious concern in the witness testimony for today's hearing.

I could go on, but I hope my point is clear—it is hard to look at the current state of Artemis and have confidence that it is on the right path.

I hope that today's hearing will help inform this Committee about the seriousness of the problems and the steps that will be needed to get Artemis on track.

Before I close, I would like to raise an issue that goes beyond Artemis and is really about the future of the nation's human spaceflight program. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, NASA has taken—and is planning to take—a series of actions that when taken as a whole put America on a path of essentially privatizing its national human spaceflight program. While some of the actions have been undertaken with the agreement of Congress, others do not have that agreement and are controversial.

NASA is now totally dependent on paying commercial service providers to get its astronauts to the International Space Station or even to Earth orbit at all.

Once the ISS is retired, the United States will have no governmental outpost in low Earth orbit—it plans to pay for access to still-to-be built private space stations.

And under NASA's current plans, the U.S. government will have no independent capability to get its astronauts to the surface of the moon. It will be dependent on paying private companies for its access to the lunar surface.

NASA will no longer even own its exploration space suits.

And it now appears that NASA is exploring essentially transferring ownership of the Space Launch System—a system developed with billions of taxpayer dollars, and a key enabler of NASA's exploration missions—to a private company.

To quote from NASA's recent SLS RFI, *“This model assumes the current government-owned and government-led system will be moved to industry...NASA will purchase launch services and payload delivery, but not take ownership of the flight hardware.”*

I find the sum of these actions to be very troubling, and it raises the question of whether NASA will even retain the capabilities and workforce within the agency that will be needed to get U.S. astronauts to Mars if all of these privatization plans are realized.

Beyond that, is it in the nation's long-term interest for the U.S. government to have no independent capability for its astronauts to access the lunar surface? To be totally dependent on getting rides to orbit or to the surface of the moon from private companies whose interests and priorities may at times conflict with those of the government? To not have a government-owned system that can represent the United States internationally in both cooperative and competitive space exploration undertakings?

These questions and their long-term policy implications for the nation's future in space need to be thoughtfully considered and debated by Congress and the White House, rather than having our national policy be set by the cumulative procurement actions of a single agency.

It is my hope that today's hearing will in part serve as a starting point for that critically important policy debate.

Thank you, and I yield back.