



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)
Are We Losing the Space Race to China?

Chairman Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today. Today's hearing will examine the current state of China's space program as well as their future plans.

Just this month, China launched its second experimental space station, the *Tiangong 2*. While it's just a single module and is far smaller than the International Space Station, it signifies continued Chinese progress and persistence.

The Soviets flew their first large, modular space station, *Mir*, three and a half decades after the first cosmonaut went to space.

China plans to have their own (slightly smaller) equivalent to the *Mir* space station in operation by the mid-2020s. This is roughly two decades after China launched its first *taikonaut* into orbit.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration's cuts to exploration and disruption of exploration planning has eliminated our opportunities to return to the Moon. And the administration has no real plan for landing people on Mars.

China continues to make progress. We cannot resign ourselves to the remembrance of past achievements. It is time for the United States to reassert its leadership.

For over fifty years, the United States has been committed to the peaceful use and exploration of outer space. Our philosophical principles of freedom, the rule of law, and transparency are evident in the actions we take.

The United States shares scientific data and findings, promotes international cooperation, and maintains international peace and security in outer space. The world has benefited from U.S. space leadership.

The success of China's space program will be different. China does not hold the same values of our society.

Unlike the United States, China does not have distinct military and civilian space programs.

The Chinese military is functionally in charge of all space activities, with the Chinese National Space Agency responsible for international affairs and intergovernmental agreements.

China already has demonstrated a strong disregard for interests of other countries in outer space through its anti-satellite tests. Here on Earth, illegal incursions into the South China Sea represent a blatant disregard for the international rule of law. Will their disregard of international law continue to extend into outer space?

When China launched its first person into space in 2003, it caught the world's attention. Over the years, our focus has waned and now China's accomplishments in space have become common-place. We cannot afford to ignore Chinese achievements and become complacent.

Just yesterday, the New York Times featured an article on the largest single dish radio telescope, which is being built in China. China is making steady progress in all fields of exploration, including astronomy.

If the United States fails to reassert its leadership, China's rise may undermine U.S. plans to transfer low-earth orbit habitation and human spaceflight from a government activity to a sustainable economic activity undertaken by the private sector.

China stands to fill another void left by this administration's disinterest in maintaining leadership in exploration.

By abandoning plans to return to the Moon, the administration invited the rise of China as a leader in space. By reallocating funding from exploration to earth science, the administration has put our leadership in space exploration at risk.

Our allies stand ready to partner in an ambitious exploration program. Unfortunately, the current administration won't allow NASA to propose one.

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