

COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND  
TECHNOLOGY**  
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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**Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)  
Hearing on Threats from Space, Part II: A Review of Private Sector Efforts  
to Track and Mitigate Asteroids and Meteors**

**Chairman Smith:** Good afternoon. A few weeks ago, our committee held a hearing to review U.S. Government efforts to track incoming asteroids and meteors. Today, we will follow up by focusing on non-governmental efforts.

The substantial public interest in this issue indicates the broad fascination with this subject. As witnesses said in our previous hearing, the events of February 15, when an asteroid passed close by the earth and a meteor struck Russia, were unique in their occurring on the same day.

This is a piece of the asteroid that exploded above Russia on February 15th. It was given to me by the Principal Investigator of NASA's asteroid sample return mission, which is slated to launch in 2016.

In our first hearing, testimony about the government's efforts was not reassuring. Most troubling to me was the fact that of the up to 20,000 asteroids that could be labeled as 'city destroyers,' we have identified only 10%. And we are unlikely to have the means to detect 90% until 2030.

Detecting asteroids should not be the primary mission of NASA. No doubt, the private sector will play an important role as well. We must better recognize what the private sector can do to aid our efforts to protect the world.

Today's hearing will help us understand the level of risk, as well as what capabilities we have and those we will need. The President's FY14 budget proposal brings necessary attention to this issue in general, but a consensus will have to be reached within Congress before progress can be made.

This won't be an effort of one agency, one company, or one country. And in these fiscally challenging times, we can't afford duplication or the inefficient use of our resources. The more we discuss and understand the challenges we face, the easier it will be to facilitate possible solutions.

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