

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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May 15, 2014

The Honorable Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator
National Aeronautics and
Space Administration (NASA)
300 E Street SW
Suite 9L39
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Administrator Bolden,

Russia's Deputy Prime Minister, Dmitry Rogozin, recently announced a series of measures designed to respond to United States sanctions imposed after Russia annexed Crimea.

With the retirement of the Space Shuttle and the cancellation of the Constellation program, the U.S. currently has no domestic capability to transport our astronauts to and from the International Space Station (ISS). Our international space partnerships, including our partnership with Russia, have historically endured political division. But Deputy Prime Minister Rogozin's statements raise serious concerns about the strength of those partnerships.

Mr. Rogozin said that Russia intends to reject a U.S. request to prolong the use of the International Space Station (ISS) beyond 2020. To this end, Mr. Rogozin suggested that Russia could use the ISS without the U.S., saying: "The Russian segment can exist independently from the American one. The U.S. one cannot."¹ This assertion raises serious questions about the stability of our partnership. As we move forward, it is important that we fully understand our nation's independent capabilities with regard to ISS operations.

At our Committee's recent March 27, 2014, hearing on NASA's budget request, I asked you whether you were "...aware of any threat that Russia might refuse to take American astronauts to the International Space Station for any reason." You responded, "I am not aware of any threat, and I am comfortable because we talk to the Russians every day. We talk to Roscosmos. There are a lot of people in Russia. Our partner is not Russia; our partner is Roscosmos, the Russian Space Agency, and we are confident that they are just as interested and just as intent on maintaining that partnership as we are."

¹ "Russia Pulls Space Cooperation in Response to Ukraine Sanctions," Reuters, May 13, 2014. Accessed at <http://www.newsweek.com/russia-pulls-space-cooperation-response-ukraine-sanctions-250869>

While this new development is not related to access to the ISS for our astronauts in the next few years, it certainly pertains to the strength of our partnership with Russia. If Mr. Rogozin's statement proves to be accurate, we will have to take a step back and evaluate the costs and benefits of maintaining the ISS beyond 2020 without our Russian partners.


In order to get a better understanding of the potential implications of Mr. Rogozin's comments, please assist the Committee in gathering additional information:


- 1) Please provide a status briefing to the Committee on the current international negotiations related to the proposed extension of the ISS beyond 2020.
- 2) Assuming that NASA will focus the Commercial Crew Program on developing a domestic capability, the US will have access to the ISS by 2017, either through a commercial crew partner or by utilizing an Orion crew capsule as a backup as directed by law. Aside from crew access, please provide a list of all of the critical components, services, or capabilities that Russia, or Roscosmos, provides to the ISS partnership that are necessary for the continued operation of the ISS beyond 2020.
- 3) Please provide an assessment of the potential impacts of the withdrawal of Russia and or Roscosmos from the ISS partnership after 2020.
- 4) Please provide an assessment of the impact of restrictions on the delivery of RD-180 or NK-33 engines on NASA. While the current restrictions are specific to engines that are intended to launch military payloads, this may impact the price NASA pays for launch vehicles that utilize these engines, as decreases in supply may impact availability.


I understand that the current situation is fluid and you may still be attempting to verify many of the reports. Please provide the requested information by May 28, 2014. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Mr. Tom Hammond, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Space, at 202-225-6371.

Thank you for your cooperation and prompt response.

Sincerely,


Rep. Lamar Smith
Chairman


Glenn M. Palazzo
Chairman
Subcommittee on Space


Rep. Mo Brooks
Vice Chairman
Subcommittee on Space

CC: Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson
Ranking Member

Rep. Donna Edwards
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Space