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**Statement of Jared Isaacman
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

before the

**Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate**

Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Van Hollen, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to speak before you today to provide an update on the state of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and to present the President's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2027.

On July 29, 1958, NASA was created to undertake and achieve the near impossible, and on July 20, 1969, when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the Moon, that is exactly what we did. In the decades since, American ingenuity was on display as the Space Shuttle program took flight, the International Space Station was constructed, and telescopes, probes and Martian rovers were launched to help unlock the secrets of the universe.

The last two decades are a different story. The GAO's 2025 assessment of major NASA projects identified roughly \$15 billion in cost overruns since 2009. As an example, our flagship X-plane, the X-59, was conceived eight years ago as a \$468 million program with a first flight in January 2022. The program to date is close to \$800 million, and first flight occurred in late 2025, only recently resuming operations.

The future enhancement to the SLS rocket, Block 1B, which is a performance upgrade to co-manifest cargo that industry is already capable of supporting at lower cost, required the Mobile Launcher 2 and the Exploration Upper Stage. ML2 was awarded in 2019 on a \$383 million contract for delivery in March 2023. The ML2 program cost was on track to \$1.8 billion with years more to go. Similarly, EUS began with a contract value of \$962 million; it has grown to over to \$2 billion. IG assessed SLS Block 1B would likely reach \$5.7 billion.

Of course, we are riding a high at this moment. The nation, and the world, paused as four brave astronauts on Artemis II flew around the Moon. NASA made the headlines we were supposed to make. We showed the world the Moon again, and we showed humanity Earth again. I want to congratulate the crew of Artemis II, the NASA workforce, our contractors and partners for delivering this moment, and for all that will inevitably come next. As President Trump so correctly said when speaking to the crew, "Today, you have made history and made all of America really proud . . . you really are modern-day pioneers."

That pioneering spirit, championed by the President, has breathed new life in our country's effort to master the stars. But for all the Artemis II mission accomplished, how we arrived at it was far from perfect, and the decisions of previous administrations that led to these deficiencies deserves careful reflection.

Almost the entirety of SLS is repurposed decades-old Space Shuttle hardware. I understand why, the Shuttle program was ending, and it was important to look after the industrial base. I will also say that was at a time when we did not have a geopolitical competitor challenging America in the high ground of space, but perpetuating the past does not help us realize a better future.

Even after over \$100 billion of taxpayer funding to date, and this most recent and successful Artemis II mission, we would not have launched again until late 2028 with the aim of putting astronauts on the Moon under the previous plan. A plan with no hope of achieving this national imperative. You do not fly rockets like this every three plus years and expect success. Further, you do not make each vehicle a work of art by materially changing the configuration. You also do not build a base in orbit above the Moon, when the scientists, the engineers, the astronauts, and certainly the space-loving community want to be on the surface of the Moon, which is hard enough to achieve.

Like many, I want to see more missions of science and discovery. Under the previous Administration, NASA, with the support of Congress, rightfully canceled a Mars Sample Return mission that was conceived to cost up to \$4 billion and in just a few years ballooned to over \$10 billion, with \$2 billion in taxpayer funds already spent. This is not good capital allocation or execution, and adding dozens of other in-formulation or life-extended science missions alongside it does not make things better.

American exceptionalism is being challenged in the high ground of space. To win, we cannot establish programs designed to be "too big to fail," but at the same time "too costly to succeed." Nor should it be throwing more money at the problem, but rather fixing the problems, concentrating resources on the mission and delivering outcomes.

The President's FY27 Budget, alongside the resources in the Working Family Tax Cut Act, focuses the agency on these priorities:

- Return to the Moon, increase launch cadence, and land American astronauts on the surface by 2028, consistent with the directive laid out in Executive Order 14369, Ensuring American Space Superiority, which was issued by President Trump last December.
- In parallel, build with industry a Moon base. This includes landers, rovers, power and communications, tech demonstrations so we can master the skills needed for future crewed missions to Mars, alongside all the scientific payloads those systems can carry.
- Ignite the orbital and lunar economy. Work alongside industry to expand commercial astronaut, payload and monetization opportunities on the Space Station, send demand signals for landers and rovers in support of a Moon base, and transition to one or multiple

commercial space stations by 2030. We have awarded private astronaut missions 5, 6, and 7.

- The budget supports the Nancy Grace Roman telescope that will launch at the end of 2026 – 100 times the field of view of Hubble and 1,000 times the scan rate. We will launch Dragonfly, the nuclear-powered octocopter to Saturn’s moon Titan, in 2028, along with a nuclear power and propulsion demonstration that includes a scientific payload – bringing billions in taxpayer investment from decades of failed programs into real capability in space – and by 2030, deliver fission surface power to the Moon.
- We presently inhabit one planet, and understanding Earth science is paramount for agriculture, industry, and natural disaster response. We value this science and intend to work with industry to get after this data more affordably.
- The President’s Budget supports investments in aeronautics that will advance civil, commercial, and national security aviation, especially next-generation air transportation systems for safer air traffic control.
- We are rebuilding core competencies at NASA, moving the work of thousands of contractors to civil servant roles, freeing up hundreds of millions in resources in support of NASA objectives.
- Inherent in everything we do at NASA is inspiration. It does not come from pamphlets or flyers, but from missions like Artemis. Landing astronauts on the Moon, X-planes, and breathtaking images from space telescopes and rovers—moments that inspire children to dress as astronauts for Halloween and grow-up to contribute to humankind’s great adventure.

I have communicated to the NASA workforce across every center I have visited, in town halls and letters. If we can concentrate the resources entrusted to us on the needle-moving objectives, why we exist as an agency, while clearing away needless bureaucracy, obstacles, and policies that impede progress, and unleash the brilliant minds at NASA; then returning to the Moon and building a lunar base will pale in comparison to what we can achieve in the years ahead.

Thank you.