

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics
U.S. Congressman Jerry Costello
Acting Ranking Member

*The International Space Station: Lessons from the
Soyuz Rocket Failure and Return to Flight*

Wednesday, October 12, 2011
2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today's hearing to receive testimony on the impacts of the Soyuz launch vehicle failure to the International Space Station (ISS).

With the retirement of the Space Shuttle, NASA is now fully dependent on Russia for transportation services to the ISS for at least the next five years, until U.S. commercial crew services are available. A few weeks ago, the risks associated with that dependence were clear when Russia experienced two back-to-back launch failures, including a malfunction in the upper stage of a Soyuz rocket transporting cargo to the ISS.

A few weeks ago, our Russian partner identified the cause of these failures and set a date to resume manned flights. NASA and its international partners are confident that the necessary steps are being taken to correct these malfunctions.

We must use this opportunity to learn from these failures and plan for the future. Specifically, I would like to hear from our witnesses on two issues.

First, does NASA have adequate insight into the investigations conducted by Russian authorities to make informed decisions about resuming Soyuz use and how can we build that information sharing in the future.

Second, how will NASA and external safety bodies work together to enhance the safety of crew and cargo transport operations in the future, especially as we transition from relying on our international partners to using commercial providers.

I welcome our panel of witnesses and look forward to their testimony. I yield back the balance of my time.