

ED PERLMUTTER
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RULES

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

August 30, 2011

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
415 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE: (202) 225-2645
FAX: (202) 225-5278

DISTRICT OFFICE:
12600 WEST COLFAX AVENUE
SUITE B-400
LAKEWOOD, CO 80215
PHONE: (303) 274-7944
FAX: (303) 274-6455

www.perlmutter.house.gov

The Honorable Charles Bolden
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Administrator Bolden:

In recent weeks, two Russian space program failures highlight many concerns about the future of NASA space exploration. Since retiring the Space Shuttle program, NASA astronauts will be entirely reliant on Russian space technology and vehicles to conduct our space operations until the new Orion Multi Purpose Crew Vehicle is complete. Recent developments underscore the need for NASA to commit all appropriate resources into the timely completion of Orion and the heavy lift vehicle.

On August 18th, the Russian space administration Roscosmos launched the rocket Breeze M to place a telecommunications satellite in orbit. Once in orbit, the satellite was lost. Shortly thereafter, the US Space Surveillance Network within the US Department of Defense located the satellite and concluded it was placed in the wrong orbit.

On August 24th, Progress 44, an unmanned Soyuz-U rocket carrying nearly three tons of supplies for the International Space Station (ISS) and its crew, failed to reach orbit and crashed in West Siberia. Senior NASA officials believe the lost supplies do not jeopardize the health of those on the ISS. However, as a result of the Progress 44 failure, NASA stated it may bring home the astronauts currently working on the ISS. This would result in the ISS being unmanned for the first time in over a decade.

Two failures in two weeks is unacceptable. All involved are fortunate no lives were lost in these mistakes. Your agency took the correct step in preventing NASA crews from using Soyuz rockets until all questions related to Progress 44 are answered. However, these failures highlight the reliability of Russian space technology which could place the safety and lives of American astronauts at risk.

Regardless of what the Russian commission investigating Progress 44 concludes, I believe American astronauts should use American rockets and American capsules. To this point the Orion Space Capsule demonstrated exemplary safety and functionality. Additionally investment in this next generation of space travel provides a significant number of jobs to people in Colorado and a positive impact to our nation's fragile economy."

The United States is a nation of vision and exploration, and NASA's human space program embodies this American spirit better than any other. The recent orbit miscalculation and Soyuz failure reinforce the necessity to expedite design and production of the next generation of NASA space flight.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Perlmutter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large, connected letters.

Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress