

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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February 23, 2021

Mr. Steve Jurczyk  
Acting Administrator  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
300 E. Street, SW  
Washington, D.C., 20546

Dear Mr. Jurczyk:

On February 9, 2021, NASA announced that it “is considering obtaining a supplemental seat on the upcoming spring Soyuz crew rotation mission for a NASA astronaut to add additional capability to the agency’s planning.”<sup>1</sup> After spending billions of taxpayer dollars on developing capabilities to launch American astronauts on American rockets from American soil, it is important for Congress to understand NASA’s existing agreements and future plans for accessing the International Space Station.

The Committee received testimony from NASA on January 17, 2018 at a hearing titled, “An Update on NASA Commercial Crew Systems Development.”<sup>2</sup> At the hearing, NASA’s witness stated, “We will not purchase seats on Russian Soyuz after this program [Commercial Crew] becomes operational,” and that NASA’s “...plan is no longer to purchase seats but we will still have the ability, we will still fly a U.S. crew member on a Soyuz and the Russians will likewise fly one of their crew members on our U.S. crew vehicles.” When asked whether Russia would pay NASA for flying Russian cosmonauts under this plan in the future, the NASA witness stated, “No, and we’re not going to pay them for carrying our astronauts to station.” The NASA witness concluded by stating, “[a]nd that will be done under no exchange of funds basis.” Following that hearing, a NASA spokesperson indicated that no formal agreement was established, stating “[w]e have agreement in principle and are determining appropriate means to implement this plan.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nasa.gov/feature/nasa-weighs-options-for-additional-crew-transportation-for-spring-soyuz-mission-to-space/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://republicans-science.house.gov/legislation/hearings/subcommittee-space-hearing-update-nasa-commercial-crew-systems-development>

<sup>3</sup> Smith, Marcia, “NASA ‘Brainstorming’ Options If Commercial Crew Not Ready Before End Of 2019 – Updated,” SpacePolicyOnline.com, January 24, 2018. Accessed at <https://spacepolicyonline.com/news/nasa-brainstorming-options-if-commercial-crew-not-ready-before-end-of-2019/>

NASA's recent solicitation for "International Space Station Seat Exchange," indicated that "NASA has no remaining crew seats on Soyuz."<sup>4</sup> At the January 2018 Committee hearing, the NASA witness testified that "[t]he manufacturing time of a Soyuz of approximately 3 years will not allow additional Soyuz to be manufactured."<sup>5</sup> Given the information and testimony listed above, it appears that NASA may be seeking to procure a Russian Soyuz seat from a third-party, on a no-exchange-of-funds-basis, and that a formal agreement between NASA and Russia for seat exchanges may not be in place.

In order for the Committee to better understand what NASA intends to use the aforementioned solicitation to procure, and more specifically, how it intends to procure those services, please facilitate a bipartisan briefing for Committee staff. If you have any questions related to this request, please contact Mr. Tom Hammond with the minority Committee staff.

Sincerely,



Rep. Frank Lucas  
Ranking Member



Rep. Brian Babin  
Ranking Member  
Space and Aeronautics  
Subcommittee

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<sup>4</sup> [https://beta.sam.gov/opp/4da33276ec1543428e3e5e6da9440533/view?keywords=80JSC021ISE&sort=-relevance&index=&is\\_active=true&page=1](https://beta.sam.gov/opp/4da33276ec1543428e3e5e6da9440533/view?keywords=80JSC021ISE&sort=-relevance&index=&is_active=true&page=1)

<sup>5</sup> See *Supra* 2.