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Contact: Heather Moeder Molino
Office: (202) 225-7690
Mobile: (703) 615-5371

Ruppersberger Calls for New, Innovative Space Program With a Manned Mission to the Moon, Mars or Beyond

Today Marks the End of an Era. Space Shuttle Launched for the Last Time.

(Washington, DC) - Today marks the end of an era. Space Shuttle Atlantis launched for the last time today in Florida. **Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD)**, the Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, is calling for a new, innovative space program that includes a manned mission to the Moon, Mars or beyond. Constellation, the plan to return astronauts to the moon by 2020, has been cancelled and there is no roadmap for America's future in space

"America is the most powerful country in the world, in part, because we control the skies. We can't allow the United States to lose its dominance in space. We must commit to a plan to return a man or woman to the Moon, Mars, or beyond in a program run by NASA in partnership with private companies. This new plan must reinvigorate our space industrial base, get our young people excited about pushing our country forward in the space race and inspire people of all ages to dream about reaching the stars. It is an issue of national security," said **Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD)**.

The shuttle program drives innovation throughout the entire space industry. Technology perfected through space shuttle missions is used on other satellites that keep us safe. We use satellites and their images to track suspected terrorists around the world and stop future attacks. Satellites provide real-time data to our troops on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan and allow us to monitor important global developments. Back here at home, we use satellites to operate the GPS system in our cars or make a cell phone call.

At the same time, Russia and China are nipping at our heels. China is pumping money into their space plan, subsidizing private investments in space technology and setting their sights on a moon landing by 2020. In fact, the United States will soon rely on and pay Russia, our one-time space nemesis, to bring American scientists to the Space Station. Those costs continue to rise because there is little competition. Congressman Ruppersberger believes the United States should build its own propulsion engines as a matter of national security. He also believes we should consider sending a robot into space first before sending a person to encourage research and innovation while keeping costs down. A manned mission should follow. In 1962, President John F Kennedy so famously said, "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

"We must make the hard choices to ensure America has a robust space program. Our national security depends on it," said **Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD)**.

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