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STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
GLOBAL SPACE AGENDA**

**THE U.S., CHINA, AND INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION ON SPACE EXPLORATION**

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9:00 – 10:30 A.M.**

WASHINGTON, D.C.

PARTICIPANTS:

**THE HONORABLE MARK KIRK (R-IL),
UNITED STATES CONGRESS**

**THE HONORABLE RICK LARSEN (D-WA),
UNITED STATES CONGRESS**

*Transcript by:
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BATES GILL: Well, ladies and gentlemen, let's give you another couple of seconds to grab a cup of coffee, but we do want to begin a timely way.

Let me extend a warm welcome to everyone here to join us at CSIS for what's going to be a very interesting and, I think, productive discussion coming out from the CSIS work on global space agenda. I'm Bates Gill. I work here at CSIS handling a lot of the work regarding China, holding the Freeman Chair in China Studies here at CSIS. And it's been my very fortunate opportunity to work with Vincent Sabathier here at CSIS and try to build what has been, I think, a very successful effort, primarily and principally a result of the work of Vincent's program to establish non-governmental and unofficial, but I think very fruitful, ties with the Chinese space program.

And this discussion today I think builds upon that very successful effort. And we're very, very pleased to be able to welcome today two of the leading members of Congress, who are working extremely hard to examine and help establish a more strategic, a more outward-looking, a more pragmatic and realistic policy of engagement with China, including on issues related to space.

Let me make a brief introduction of both of them. First, Representative Mark Kirk is from the 10th Congressional District in Illinois, which is located near Chicago. He is now serving in his third term in Congress and comes to this work with a very interesting background having been a naval reservist and has also worked in the U.S. House International Relations Committee as a staffer, and also with the World Bank, and as I recall gained some of his advanced education from abroad as well, so something of a rare and interesting member of Congress who has had as much experience as he has abroad, including, I would add, serving as an aircrew man over Iraq during Operation Northern Watch.

Representative Rick Larsen comes to us from the 2nd Congressional District of Washington state, which is located near Seattle, and he too, is currently in his third term. Rick serves also, on the House Armed Services Committee, the Transportation Infrastructure Committee, and the Agriculture Committee.

Now, why have we invited these two gentlemen here? I think from my point of view, most importantly, Mark and Rick are co-founders and co-chairmen of the U.S. China working group, which is a bipartisan organization, founded in June 2005, made up of members of Congress.

Two-thousand-five was an interesting year up on Capitol Hill as a number of such groups made up of members of Congress were formed in order to take a more careful and hands-on look at the emergent U.S.-China relationship. The U.S.-China Working Group I think is among – is the most active and most interesting, and I think has taken a position of engagement and pragmatic approach towards China.

Both Rick and Mark traveled to China most recently in January of this year, where among other things, they were able to make a visit to Jiuquan in Gansu Province, which is one of China's space launch centers. Jiuquan is famous in China for having been the site where China launched its first satellite into space, the Dongfanghong-1 back in 1970. And more recently, and perhaps more famously, Jiuquan was the site of China's first manned space mission, Shenzhou-5 launch back in October of 2003.

That is very remarkable and rare, and I think that it might even have been the very first time that members of Congress from the United States were able to visit this sensitive site in China. And it was there that I think that they were able to discuss with Chinese counterparts the possibilities for future space-related collaboration between the United States and China. So both for their interest in China broadly and because of their interests they have demonstrated specifically in issues related to space, we are extremely fortunate to have them here.

Let me just quote a couple of things that these two gentlemen have said recently. Congressman Kirk said, "The 21st century will not be a happy one if China and the United States are against each other. There is a significant opportunity for both countries to enjoy unparalleled prosperity, if we cooperate."

Congressman Larsen said, "Our best interest is an engagement with China where we can work toward common goals and solve shared problems." I couldn't agree more, and I think that we're very fortunate to have two gentlemen like this on Capitol Hill, who recognize the strategic interest we have in a pragmatic and realistic approach to China. So please join me in welcoming Mark Kirk and Rick Larsen.

(Applause.)

REPRESENTATIVE MARK KIRK (R-IL): I want to thank everyone for coming to talk about Rick and I's favorite topic, which is the U.S. relationship with China.

In my work as a congressman representing the suburbs above Chicago, I note how in Washington, the foreign policy discussion is dominated by two countries: Iran and Iraq, and now sometimes North Korea. But when I'm back home, China comes up more often than any other country and we have formed this group to look uniquely for the Congress at the long haul of establishing China as the country with which the United States has a primary diplomatic relationship.

The U.S.-China Working Group, now encompassing about 50 Republicans and Democrats, doesn't take a position on issues, but we try not to be dragon slayers in this and not be panda huggers, but to develop a more nuanced view towards China. We were two of six members of Congress to participate in the recent Hu Jintao summit, and we are now working on the upcoming Bush-Hu Jintao bi-lat at the UNGA in September – and looking forward to the NASA administrator's visit to China, also in September.

For the China Working Group, we've been looking at a number of practical steps the U.S. and China can take to improve our relations. For example, we have advocated the establishment of a defense telephone link between the Pentagon and the Ministry of National Defense – looking at beefing up China's formal legal commitment on intellectual property enforcement with the enforcement measures, and looking now at a joint dialogue that Rick and I would like to start on protecting the Olympic games.

We've also talked about space cooperation, especially in the area of search and rescue. With regard to space cooperation, the United States and China signed an agreement with regard to search and rescue on the surface of the earth if a U.S. or Chinese crew de-orbited in the wrong place. We think that we should probably take a step further and look at a search-and-rescue capability for taikonauts or astronauts in orbit by formal engineering and completion of a common docking ring between the Shenzhou vehicle and U.S.-compatible vehicles, so that if ever one country has a bird on the pad and is able to accomplish a rescue in orbit, it would make taikonauts or astronauts simply safer because of that agreement.

The reason why we are working on this topic and why we asked to see Jiuquan was that, I think the manned space program has a potential all out of proportion to its size and cost for improving the diplomatic, political, and military atmosphere between the United States and China.

One can only think about your childhood, or mine, and the command that the U.S. manned space program had in influencing the direction that we all took in our careers and our aspirations for our country. And I simply brought this as one example – many of you have seen it: the Chinese first aid covers and command that it has – the space program, the Shenzhou-5 and Shenzhou-6 missions had on Chinese popular culture. And if we can have an element of cooperation – and I'm being very specific here – with the civilian manned space program of China and the United States, I think it would have an enormous bilateral political development.

Let me just conclude before handing over to Rick to talk about our big visit to the launch facility with a report that we had commissioned by NASA. I'm a NASA appropriator. I sit on the subcommittee that funds NASA. And we asked NASA to do a formal report on China's activities in space. This was the report that was transmitted to us in May of this year. And I think it reflects a growing attention that we should pay to China's space program, both military and civilian, and how the United States interacts with that.

With that, let me hand it over to Rick, and just say that everything we do on the U.S.-China Working Group is relentlessly bipartisan. And I'll have him talk about our groundbreaking, first-ever visit to the Chinese space launch complex.

REPRESENTATIVE RICK LARSEN (D-WA): Well, it was cold. (Laughter.) January in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region is a cold time of year. But I'll cover

with you, all, some of those things we saw, as well as some of our visit with vice administrator of the Chinese NASA space agency.

I think it's appropriate that we're meeting today in the context of the U.S. launch, the shuttle Discovery, and the work they are doing in space right now, just as well as the fact that, you know, China continues head long in its development of space.

I was doing some notes for this meeting today and one author noted that space is three things: it's a zone of commerce, it's a scientific laboratory, and it's a military operation platform. Those characteristics apply to basically every country that is seeking to create their own space in space. As a result, there is opportunity for cooperation, for competition, as well as it's a potential for conflict. So I think it's important that we have this discussion, especially in light of China now being only one of three countries that have put people into space.

Our conversation in Beijing at the China National Space Agency really left me with a deep impression. And I'll let you know what that impression is after I just cover with you what the vice administrator said. He was talking about international cooperation that China's currently involved in. And this – you all know this, I'm sure. First off, China is cooperating with Brazil on CBERS. It's a co-development of a satellite. China provides a launch vehicle. It's built in Brazil and it's used to monitor development resources, the environment in South America.

China is cooperating with the European Space Agency in Galileo specifically, and a few other things. China and Russia do some cooperation. China is cooperating with countries in the Asian-Pacific region on small multi-mission satellites. And as he was going down this list – as he was going down this list of elements or areas where they are cooperating with all these other countries, it became clear that they are not cooperating with the United States; we're not cooperating with them, and there are some obvious reasons for that – we've been through in the most recent past.

But the other message, and I think the big message for me was China is not waiting for the United States to cooperate with them when it comes to space. And you couple that with the fact they have put people into space. I think it ought to force a discussion in the U.S. among policymakers about what our approach to China and space will be since they are cooperating with others, they are not waiting for us to cooperate, and they have put people into space. I think those are three big factors that we need consider as we move forward in looking at China and space in the U.S.

It's also very interesting, we were asked to deliver a message back to our colleagues in the House and the Senate that China wants to cooperate with the United States, and we said that we'd be happy to deliver that, and that's as much as we can do, which we have to let folks know. But there are some challenges in Congress. The environment in Congress with regards to China, generally, and space specifically, provides a lot of challenge.

First off, there is a large amount of distress surrounding China's space program in Congress because of questions of intent. Congress views the ambiguity of the PLA's role over the space program and concerns over dual-use technology as major barriers to U.S.-China space cooperation. They are concerns in Congress and the Pentagon about the potential for anti-satellite technology. There is just general anti-China sentiment created by other issues that affect the U.S.-China relationship, and those created opposition to cooperation on any number of fronts.

We are obviously very interested in China's space program, noting the report that Mark and the folks in the Appropriations Committee were able to get out of NASA, but I think it's important that we need to deepen – important to say that we need deepen Congress' understanding of China, the complexities and difficulties of the U.S. relationship with China, and then specifically on space as well, to find ways to increase transparency and address the real benefits of cooperation at any level with China, and I think that's where the U.S.-China Working Group comes into play.

We need to make clear that there are real concerns in Congress on the national security front, again, not just with regards to space but with regards to China's military budget, with regards to transparency and the lack of military-to-military cooperation, which is why Mark and I have pushed a defense telephone link between the Pentagon and the Ministry of National Defense in China, as well as a variety of other things.

I think that there is one theme about the U.S.-China Working Group that would apply yet to this issue is that there are a lot of folks who are looking for grabbing the thousand-dollar bill instead of trying to pick up nickels and dimes in the relationship with China. And I think because – if China sees our relationship as really long term, we may want to as well, see it as really long term and focus on picking up nickels and dimes along the way in order to build up to a place where we can grab that thousand-dollar bill, grab the big prize, whatever that prize is in terms of our relationship with China and theirs with us. And so we are trying to find ways to – find things to point out to be easy nickels and dimes to pick up.

One thing coming up with Administrator Griffin's trip to China this fall, this September, is to try to develop an agenda that would be useful to him and useful to – and respectful, I think, of China's space program, which could include further discussion about a common docking device. It could include discussion about scientific exploration. It could include debris tracking.

And it could include what would be a largely symbolic event, but I think a recognition that China is, you know – has made it into space, and that is perhaps something a simple – simple to do once it's done; very hard to get setup, as we found, when we were in China – and that is to try and meet with the two taikonauts who went up in October 2005, meet with them, get a picture with them. I think that would be highly symbolic, but also I think the Chinese would be very proud to show that off.

Both Mark and I was given a commemorative stamp collection and postcard collection of the Shenzhou-6 flight, autographed by the taikonauts. And I showed it to a Chinese friend of mine. He said that if I were to go back to China right now and sell that I could get a lot of money for it because these guys are national heroes, well known throughout China. So yeah, I only bring that up because there are some symbolic things that we can do to show some recognition.

Where that leads us? I don't know, but I think the three main points I made about – they are cooperating with others, they are not waiting for us, they have put people in space indicates that we do need to take another look at what our space relationship is with China. We may just come to the same place, but I think it's a discussion worth having.

MR. : Thank you very much for those comments. I think that we have about 40 minutes for Q&A, so we will welcome your questions.

MR. GILL: Well, thank you very much for coming by. (Laughter.)

MR. : Brendan?

Q: In terms of –

MR. GILL: Oh, could you identify yourself?

Q: Brendan Curry with The Space Foundation. I apologize. You mentioned some of the roadblocks to potential cooperation, dual use, kind of the military things. Could you help maybe tell us what nonmilitary issues are causing heartburn in the Congress, currency evaluation, things like that that might help give us a – because this is a predominately aerospace and defense crowd, but there might be some other issues that help fill in the lines for us – and what else – other hurdles there are?

REP. LARSEN: Yeah, I think intellectual property rights enforcement, although China has a – I think most people would conclude now that China has a good IPR regime in place to their laws. They still lack appropriate and aggressive enforcement. It is spotty. There is a Chinese proverb. I only know three, but this one is very applicable, and that is the hills are high and the emperor is far away. And when it comes to IPR enforcement that is one of the biggest problems. What Beijing says isn't exactly what happens, say, in the Gansu Province, for instance, on IPR or even down south. So IPR enforcement is huge.

Currency is an issue for some. Business interest is not a big issue for others. IPR tends to be the number-one thing. Human rights and democracy always come up in conversation with members of Congress. And it's not – you know, these issues aren't Democratic or Republican either; they really span the globe, if you will, within Congress.

It's just that, you know, folks who maybe pick human rights as their issue or currency evaluation, my colleagues in Congress, haven't realized yet that if they were all

to get together, they could actually maybe push our policy down some paths that wouldn't be very positive. But they don't get together because they are so focused on, you know, this one set of issues. And I think that creates a space for folks like Mark and me, and the folks in the U.S.-China Working Group to try and educate members – again, try to understand the complexities of the relationships I think between the U.S. and China.

REP. KIRK: Let me just say that we talk about how everyone is entitled to their own opinion but not their own facts. And with regard to China, of the three tribes that run Washington, the White House, the Senate, and the House, I've characterized the White House view towards China as nuanced and complex. The Senate view towards China is at least multifaceted with some ups and some downs. And the House view towards China is relentlessly negative and highly misinformed.

We started our group in the wake of the CNOOC's bid for Unocal and my impression was that if I'd gone on to the House floor and said, it's just awful that CNOOC has made this bid because China allows no U.S. oil investment in their country, everyone would have agreed with me and that is completely wrong. If I had said that it's terrible that China is bidding for Unocal because Unocal has a huge retail presence in the United States and still runs hundreds of gas stations, people would have said yes, and yet Unocal had sold those stations long ago.

If I had said that Unocal stands for the Union Oil Company of California and a vast percentage of the operations happens in California, people would have said yes, and yet Unocal is a largely an Indonesian operation. It's important for us to be accurate with regards to China. It is perfectly acceptable to criticize China when you have a correct means. What we are against is uninformed criticism, which is largely what I regard as dominate on the House floor today.

Q: John Logsdon from George Washington University. Mr. Kirk, in your remarks you kind of verbally underlined working with the civilian human space flight program. Mr. Larsen, you said the role of the PLA is a bit unclear. Can you share the insights into that relationship you brought away?

REP. KIRK: We just talked about our trip because we asked to see the launch facility and I knew the sensitivity of the site, and so I was very specific that I wanted to see the assembly building and launch facility for manned civilian space – being very, very specific. And to my surprise they permitted this.

But it was clear when we traveled all the way to Gansu Province, when we took one of the coldest buses I've ever been on all the way into the launch site that this was still largely a military-administered site, and it was the Ministry of National Defense who largely controlled this site.

Let me just say when we were there with Congressman Tom Feeney, who represents Kennedy Space Center – his wife actually works in the vehicle assembly

building in Florida – we were struck by how new the facility was, how well maintained, and even when we walked into the vehicle assembly building, I think I heard a visible gasp from Tom when he saw how large and how modern, and in some ways how more capable the Chinese VAB was than the one at Kennedy Space Center.

All of this led to a discussion on the way back, probably the most frank discussion we had during the mission with our host on the long ride back, about if a cooperation agenda could be built how could it be built. And I think one of the things that would be necessary is a vast upgrade in the transparency of the Chinese civilian space program, its budget, its operation, its command, and its direction. Over the long haul, if China had an entirely civilian space agency that was completely run and administered and even guarded by a civilian agency, that would improve potential for cooperation an international context.

We're not there yet, but if I could underscore one point that would increase the comfort zone with the Chinese, it would be to create that civilianization of their program as our program did in the 1950s.

REP. LARSEN: You know, I think there is going to be crossovers, certain crossover in our civilian program. We've got military folks as well as the civilian folks in the space shuttle program. We started with putting Air Force and Navy folks into our rockets. So there is always going to be crossover. The issue in China – the issue with us is that we pretty much know who runs it, who sets policy. We're just not sure who runs it and who sets the policy. There is the, you know, commission for science, technology, and industry for national defense costing. There is the National Space Administration. There is also the armaments department of the PLA who are involved.

So we're trying to – you know there are smarter people in this room probably on this issue, but we're trying to divine – and sometimes it's like trying to divine some things – trying to divine who runs the show and who we need talk because that will define what agenda, frankly, is practical and acceptable to U.S. policymakers.

We are not going to run headlong into this, into a relationship; we are going to walk very slowly. One more proverb, you know: We're going to touch the stones when we cross the river; we are not going to just jump into the river and swim across. We're going to take this – do this very carefully, if we do it at all, but we have to – I think it's time we had a discussion to decide if we do it at all. Transparency is pretty important here; we would like to see it be important to China.

Q: Dan Vukara (sp), Futron Corporation. You mentioned that China was interested in cooperating in the United States and voiced support for that idea. Did the Chinese put forth any specific proposals about how they might want to cooperate with us?

REP. LARSEN: You know, that's a great question that struck me last night as I was going through my notes on my visit. And what struck me the most is that, you know,

the Chinese say they want to cooperate. And I was reading some of the – you know, this “China Security: Bringing Chinese Perspectives to Washington.” It’s filled with a lot of great papers written by the Chinese scholars, but it’s definitely from a point of view of the Chinese who are involved in their program.

What struck me the most is that there is a lot of talk about it would be in the U.S. interest to cooperate with China, but that’s kind of where it ends, you know. It’s sort of like when we talk to the Ministry of National Defense and they say, well, the U.S. has no – should have no concerns about Chinese military policy or Chinese military budgets. You know, the answer is I can’t take that to the bank to anybody; you know, you have to – let’s explore what that means and let’s define that, and just try to understand the Chinese on these issues, and in particular what they mean, how they see things in our interest.

I’m sure we have ideas about what’s in our interest as well. But saying it’s in our interest – to have our potential competitor or potential partner say it’s in our interest doesn’t mean it’s in our interest, and we need to do a better job of defining our own interests. And I would like to hear what the Chinese think is in our interest as well.

REP. KIRK: Let me just say that I got the sense that we were coming up with the specifics. And in the spirit of the U.S.-China Working Group, of tangible steps that could actually be taken by defining the orbital search and rescue, by defining the common docking ring, by proposing that the NASA administrator go to China, by saying that we should meet the taikonauts, we have actually gone forward and say that the Shenzhou-6 should come on exhibit to a U.S. museum. My favorite is the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. Rick has a favorite museum in Seattle.

All those, as part of the dialogue – high-level visits by China to the United States this summer, and the Bush-Hu Jintao bi-lat in New York in September are part of what we would hope would be a growing practical working agenda.

Q: Brian Wagner. You had mentioned that the House is very uninformed in – (off mike) – China. (Off mike.) Did you find any great examples in the space program in which either the House, Senate, or the administration are very misinformed – (off mike).

REP. KIRK: My take on the House of Representatives floor right now is if I said that China had a very active manned space program, that would still be news to a lot of my colleagues who missed it entirely. We participated in a lot of the media, largely Asian media around the launch and recovery of the Shenzhou-6. And I was struck by how in my immediate market in Chicago, it was almost a nonevent, and yet, my god, this was the third nation on the planet orbiting people in their own built vehicle, you know, the in the history of the 21st century – a fairly big leap forward. So I think this entire field is one in which the Congress is largely unaware. And when you think about China plans for its own space station or China plans for a lunar rover, that is all news to all of our colleagues.

REP. LARSEN: I would just say as a member of the Armed Services Committee and the Strategic Subcommittee, we're moving forward and just looking at generally at the issue of space policy from a military perspective. And a lot of my colleagues on the committee were surprised that, one, we were able to visit the launch facility, and surprised, secondly, that China is advanced as they are.

These folks who mentioned this term, "space race," I mean, I don't know that we're in a space race with China. If this thing is a marathon, we have got 385 yards left and they are still at the starting at the starting view, really in my view, when it comes to how far we've advanced and where we have a potential to go. So I think, you know, we've got – they have a long way to go to get to where we are and our space program, which gives us an opportunity I think to, again, explore where we might be able to cooperate, and if there are places that we can cooperate. But I think there is a general amount of surprise about how far they have advanced.

Q: Collin Clark, Washington Aerospace Briefing. There has been a great deal of talk from Mr. Calvert and some of your other colleagues about the large number of engineers that China supposedly graduates each year. There seems to be a lot of discussions about how many of these are actually engineers, as we would define them. I have spoken with some the house staff about whether we should cooperate and why, and several of them have said it's too early. We don't really – you know, with the Russians, we started cooperating because we wanted their engineers to be doing something other than working for people we didn't like. What are the interests that the ruthless, nasty, brutish, short interests that bring us together?

REP. KIRK: I would just say first, to learn more about a very active program, which is rapidly developing. Number two, you know, in my view, there are two space programs we ought to watch very carefully. One is that of the government of China; the other is of the government of India. And so, there is a large degree of ignorance about both of those programs at the senior levels of the U.S. Congress, and I think that's to their detriment.

As far as short-term benefits, I think it's important to outline what we are saying and what we are not saying. You know, a broad-based agenda of cooperation and joint exploration in orbit in other countries is not what we were talking about. What we are talking about is ground and orbital search and rescue, and possibly some exchange, to become better informed on this.

I will say one other thing. There is a political idea out there of a flood of Chinese engineers arriving in the United States who are largely mining U.S. databases and accelerating Chinese development. Part of that is true, but that is actually less true today than it was five years ago. The dominant trend that I hear from leading technical universities in Illinois is that most Chinese students are going home. The rate of Chinese people who want to stay and in any way participate is dropping very quickly because the job prospects in China are so hot and the pay so good that a quick tour through the United

States is all they are interested in. And other foreign destinations are becoming more interesting.

It is so difficult to get a visa in the United States and to process your technical university education that European and other destinations are becoming the preferred destinations for Chinese engineering. And so we're seeing a drop in the number of Chinese students coming to the United States and a rapid departure of those who have stayed from previous rates, going elsewhere.

Rick and I have been concerned about the other side of the equation, that by a rough estimate, there are approximately 150,000,000 people in China that have or are studying English. There are only 28,000 Americans that have studied Chinese, an enormous intellectual gap that causes our leading exporters, the commercial and economic side of our government, and the military and intelligence side of our government to have a huge human capital shortfall in the ability to understand and monitor what's happening in China.

So we proposed a U.S.-China Engagement Act that would dramatically upgrade resources for the instruction of Chinese to Americans, both at university and high school levels to redress that balance because what I see is a growing gap, but it's not one you think of – an increasing number of Chinese returning home and studying in non-American Universities, from what was happening ten years ago.

REP. LARSEN: With regard to space, I think right now what we need to consider is our strategic interests, and I don't mean militarily strategic. I mean that China sees the space program as part of its bigger economic development goal. When we were there in January, President Hu had a big conference of scientists and physicists from the universities outline his science and technology program. They want to be the 10th-most technologically advanced country by 2015, China does. They are going to do that indigenously or by importing, and largely they are going to do it indigenously.

The space program is part of that economic-development goal. And it gets back to what I said earlier; they are not waiting; they are not waiting for us. It's like water going down a hill. You know, if it hits a rock it goes around, you know. If they can't get into the – if Chinese students can't get into the U.S. to study, they'll go to a different country to study. They are going to do it, and we need – I think, U.S. policy needs to understand that, address it, and find ways to engage China on any number of issues because that country is thinking more strategically in terms of goal of competitiveness than I think we are.

Q: Ian Bright (sp), George Mason University. From time to time, statements appear in the press that are attributed to senior Chinese government officials that relate to the pace and the ambitions of their human space flight program. Given what you gentlemen know, how much credence do you apply to these statements?

REP. LARSEN: Well, if they said they were going to be on the moon by next year, I wouldn't give a lot of credence to it. In fact, there is one – there is some conflict. You get a conflicting story about whether their ultimate goal is to put a person on the moon or not, or a timeline to put a person the moon. I think recently their hedging that. But I think generally the timelines of, you know – hitting timelines about lunar orbit and space stations and possibly a Chinese taikonaut on the moon by 2020, 2025, I think generally – I mean, that's a pretty consistent message, again, but for some of the hedging about when they put a person on the moon. But the rest of it, you know, it's been pretty consistent.

Based on what I saw, as well, they are – I'm not an expert; I'm a member of Congress, so there is a gap between those, all right. But based on what I saw – and I would ask you to read an article – a lot of good articles out there, but space.com, April 12, 2006, did an interview with Tom Feeney in Florida. He went on a trip with us. And I think it's a – his impressions of how far China has come I think are pretty interesting to read. Again, I put a lot credibility to that, to the general timeline that they have in place.

REP. KIRK: I would just say, my impression is the military development in space by China are profound and not well understood by the West. Civilian development – my sense is it's slightly slowed despite the technical prowess and achievement and the PR attention put on the program. The tangible transparent financial commitments by the central government of China to the space program could be larger than they are and so I have got some sense that the momentum on the civilian side is not as big as it could be.

REP. LARSEN: Let me just say this too, I'd agree with that because I don't China wants to make a mistake. When they put the next set of folks up in space for that specific mission, they want it to go absolutely go right. They don't want to, you know, have to delay a launch. They don't want to, you know, rescue their folks in space; rescue them on the ground. My impression is that they will not do it until they know, you know, going to be right, so they'll take as much time as they need to get it right.

Q: Yeah, Steve Benson, CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program. The Russians, their perspectives and sensitivities – do they play and will they impact your thinking on this, the engagement of China in space?

REP. LARSEN: Here's one those areas where you're the expert and I'm not. You are probably more qualified – you probably are more qualified to speak on that. I think we don't generally look – we're not generally looking at China and Russia and space, although there is cooperation. We've been looking at this, for instance, what China and Russia did in a military exercise. We're looking at them right now with regards to North Korea, Iran. It's sort of some of these – I don't want to downplay them by calling them day-to-day issues, but they are sort of crisis-of-the-week issues as oppose to something strategic. I'm not aware of anything that's out there that looks specifically from a strategic perspective between China, Russia, and space. I'm sure it's out there but it hasn't cropped up.

REP. KIRK: I would just say one can only take a quick peek at the Shenzhou-6 and see a striking similarity to another space vehicle we all know well. And so I think it's clear who is the parent of the Chinese program. And the interesting thing is when we were at the space launch complex, though, the Chinese told us about significant reengineering of the vehicle. And so, I don't think we were treated to any sort of view of anything that looked particularly different than up-engineered Soyuz. So right now the parentage is very close. But given the pace of the program and the general development of Chinese military developments, I think you are going to see a diversion of the two programs. I would expect in the future, but right now they seem very closely related.

MR. : I would like to add something on this point. When we visited China, I was fortunate – it was a time when President Putin was in Beijing, actually. And so there was a lot of – (inaudible) – and the cooperation with Russia, first of all, because it's Russia, India, and China. And so we, of course, we asked the question, what about space? And I understand they have currently more than 50 ongoing cooperation projects in space with Russia.

REP. KIRK: Just one other thing. You know how Napoleon talks about how amateurs talk about tactics, and professionals talk about logistics, and there might be analogy in space how amateurs talk about manned space vehicles and professionals talk about boosters. And the Chinese development in booster technology is enormous.

Q: Christine Xi (ph) from Phoenix TV of Hong Kong. As regard to the personnel exchange, like engineers, do we have any specific proposal right now to get Chinese space staff or engineers to come to the U.S. – exchange?

REP. KIRK: My read on it is a lot is hanging on the administrator's visit in September. That is a very important visit for the United States. And how that visit goes I think is critical.

Q: (Off-mike.)

REP. KIRK: Not that I am aware of. And I know the administrator will be prepared to have that sort of discussion. And from Rick and I's perspective of increased knowledge and engagement with China, we really hope that visit goes well.

Q: (Off-mike.)

REP. KIRK: We're a font of proposals. (Laughter.)

REP. LARSEN: I got a million of them.

REP. KIRK: Yeah, right.

Yeah, I would just say before Rick and I have openly talked about proposals we generally have a private dialogue with the Chinese, which is why we're confidently

talking about the defense telephone link; we're confidently talking about orbital search and rescue; we're confidently talking about the visit of the administrator. I think I know where things should go in the future, but one of the things that we like to build is a level of trust with the government of China and to discuss some new ideas privately first to see where there is potential, and then if there seems to be potential then go ahead and talk to DOD, talk to State, talk to NASA about how this can go forward before we could go public.

Q: (Off-mike.)

REP. LARSEN: Maybe we can talk afterwards.

Q: I'm sorry. Okay.

REP. LARSEN: Yeah.

Q: Graham Gibbs with Canadian Space Agency. In years past the Chinese have indicated interest in participating at some level in the international space station program. Of course that did not happen. When you were there have they ever mentioned – they reopened that discussion at all in terms of a visit, a docking, or any form of interest in participation?

REP. LARSEN: My recollection of conversations is that they would – they are still in the process of trying to reopen that conversation. They are still interested.

Q: (Off-mike.)

REP. LARSEN: I'm not sure – I don't know how to answer that the question. I'll have to think about it. But clearly space is important to the U.S. commerce currently. When you put your credit card into a gas pump to pay for your gas – actually these days one tank will pay for a satellite. (Laughter.) So that's – when you – you know, this little thing here, this – my Blackberry helps me out everyday with my schedule and e-mails, but that's obviously hooked up with satellite. So just on its face I think the American people – and we're exploring this in the committee – the American people ought to have a deeper understanding, if they don't now. But I think it's helpful to have a deeper understanding of how space and satellites currently help our economy move forward.

The point I was making at the beginning is that that applies the same to every country. And so when we consider that China may want – is putting up satellites and wants to put up satellites in space – sometimes we tend to see it strictly through a military lens. That's certainly, I think, appropriate to do, but it's not appropriate to look at it only through that lens.

China is like any other country. They want to grow economically. They have got a killer cell phone system. The cell phone coverage between Jiuquan and the space launch facility – a three-hour drive through the Gobi Desert, is better coverage than on

Whidbey Island and South Whidbey Island in my district. I was calling halfway around the world to my chief of staff saying, hey, I'm in the Gobi Desert. And he's like, why are you calling? It's 11 a.m. – it's 11 p.m. Why are you calling? Can you hear me now? (Laughter.)

China sees satellites in part as good for its commerce, just like we do, just like countries in Europe do, just like Canada does. But obviously there are other applications to a satellite in space that cause us concern.

REP. KIRK: And I would just say probably the biggest payoff on a civilian space cooperation is political. Nothing dominates the two cultures of the countries more than the pride in taikonauts and astronauts, what's happening in space. And if there is cooperation, it then narrows the space for those who would want to have a negative relationship and broadens the space for those who want a positive relationship. There is enormous potential if China and the United States decide to not have a military competition and continue down the Deng Xiaoping policy of China as a huge, open, potential commercial space of great potential for a number of U.S. employers and economic interest.

And we all know the other side of that coin. Everybody here is old enough to be good, solid Cold Warrior veterans. And I think if we can prevent a Cold War from breaking out and over the long haul move the relationship to more of the kind of a commercial competition that the United States has with the European Union without a huge amount of discussion of military competition, the net prosperity benefit for the two countries is enormously enhanced.

I don't know how this is going to turn out. One of the reasons for the U.S.-China Working Group is to influence the peaceful side of the outcome much more than the military side. As a military man, as a guy who is still serving in uniform one weekend a month, I am fully aware of the military side of this equation – which is why I would like the peaceful side to work out if it can. And the symbolic nature of civilian space cooperation is so powerful that I think that's the biggest benefit for the United States.

MR. : Last question.

Q: Alan Ladd (sp) with Northrop Grumman. Did you get a sense – is most of what China has built done by the government or is there any – did you get any sense of an industry base at all?

REP. LARSEN: It's largely government-driven. I didn't get any sense of any private industry. It might be small if it exists at all, but it's largely driven by the government – policy as well operation, construction, the whole bit.

REP. KIRK: My sense of – not to anthropomorphize too much, but the structure of the Chinese civilian space program is somewhat similar to where we were structurally back like '56, '57 – hugely coming out of the Air Force with some civilian applications.

We're not there with a whole range of civilian launch vehicles, civilian management, civilian program, and a civilian contractor base. I don't think we saw any of that.

MR. : I have two little questions before we close. The first one is, as you discussed, the Cold War. Of course, everybody is thinking about – (inaudible) – model of cooperation where a special ring was developed. I understand that during this development the State Department took the lead, and the space agencies were working under a diplomatic umbrella. Is this a model you are looking for in your proposal?

REP. KIRK: I used to work in the State Department. And my strong preference is to have as few State Department diplomats in the engineering as possible knowing how mathematics- and engineering-adverse my former colleagues were.

MR. : And maybe the last question – I hope somebody had asked the question – is about the recent events. The Department of Treasury recently produced a statement in which a major Chinese company involved in space was sanctioned for proliferation of missile technology towards Iran. That is the first point. The second point is, of course, the launch by North Korea of ballistic missiles, which everybody agrees contains some Chinese design, even if the proliferation took place a while back. How do you think those two events will affect the possible discussions and possibly the trip of Dr. Griffin in China?

REP. LARSEN: I think, you know, there is a reality to the relationship that we have with China. And that reality is there are many relationships that we have with China on a variety of levels. And with the two issues you bring up, those are issues that we're going to have to address, that we will have to confront, even, China with. I think back to the President's speech on the South Lawn. And there were obviously some problems that happened at that South Lawn speech. But the point I want to make about it is that he talked about democracy and human rights, for instance. And people say, well that was – he shouldn't have done that; that was sort of too much in the face of President Hu.

The fact is when you talk to the United States you have to talk democracy and human rights; it's just part of who we are. We're going to talk jobs, and we're going to talk the economy. We're going to talk military issues. And the point I'm making is if these are issues that make us uncomfortable and they do, then we're going to talk about them, and the Chinese should expect that we're going to talk about them. They may be uncomfortable to talk about, but we're going to have to address these issues if we're going to even get to a point where we can talk about moving forward.

With regards, specifically, to North Korea, tomorrow the U.S.-China Working Group is hosting four members of congress – a meeting with Ambassador Zhou of China to discuss North Korea, to discuss the Chinese delegation's visit to North Korea this week, and to communicate our members' views on how we would like to see this turn out as well. So we'll get a chance to talk directly with China tomorrow.

MR. : Well, Congressmen Kirk and Larsen, first, thank you very much for coming at CSIS. Thank you very much for your informed criticism – (laughter) – in trying to define a positive agenda with China. Thank you very much, everybody here, for coming today to our global space agenda. We'll have future events in the fall, and we'll let you know. Please – (applause). Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

(END)