



Highlights of [GAO-07-595T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Space, Aeronautics, and Related Sciences, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U. S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

On January 14, 2004, the President announced a new *Vision* for space exploration that directs the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to focus its efforts on returning humans to the moon by 2020 in preparation for future, more ambitious missions.

Implementing the *Vision* will require hundreds of billions of dollars and a sustained commitment from multiple administrations and Congresses. Some of the funding for implementing exploration activities is expected to come from funding freed up after the retirement of the Space Shuttle, scheduled for 2010, and projected termination of U.S. participation in the International Space Station by 2016.

Congress, while supportive of the effort has voiced concern over the potential gap in human space flight. In the NASA Authorization Act of 2005, Congress stated that it is the policy of the United States to have the capability for human access to space on a continuous basis. NASA has made it a priority to minimize the gap to the extent possible.

GAO provides no recommendations in this statement. However, GAO continues to emphasize that given the Nation's fiscal challenges and NASA's past difficulty developing systems within cost, schedule, and performance parameters, it is imperative that the agency adequately manage this transition in a fiscally competent and prudent manner.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-595T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Allen Li at (202) 512-4841 or lia@gao.gov.

NASA

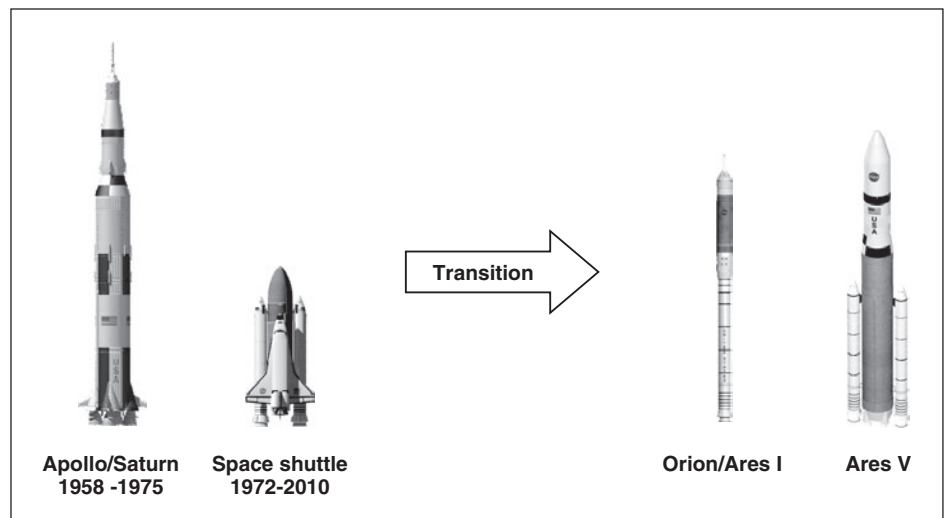
Issues Surrounding the Transition from the Space Shuttle to the Next Generation of Human Space Flight Systems

What GAO Found

NASA is in the midst of a transition effort of a magnitude not seen since the end of the Apollo program and the start of the Space Shuttle Program more than 3 decades ago. This transition will include a massive transfer of people, hardware, and infrastructure. Based on ongoing and work completed to-date, we have identified a number of issues that pose unique challenges to NASA as it transitions from the shuttle to the next generation of human space flight systems while at the same time seeking to minimize the time the United States will be without its own means to put humans in space. These issues include: sustaining a viable workforce; effectively managing systems development efforts; managing the supplier base; providing logistical support to the International Space Station; identifying and disposing of property and equipment; ensuring adequate environmental remediation; and transforming its business processes and financial management system.

NASA already has in place many processes, policies, procedures and support systems to carry out this transition. However, successful implementation of the transition will depend on thoughtful execution and effective oversight. How well NASA overcomes some of the challenges we have identified will not only have an effect on NASA's ability to effectively manage the gap in the U.S. human access to space, but will also affect the agency's ability to secure a sound foundation for the President's space exploration policy.

Moving to the next generation of human space flight vehicles



Source: NASA images; GAO graphic .