

*ABC's Good Morning America*

01/30/26

7:01:26 a.m. [TEASE]

12 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: ABC News Investigates; Mission to the Moon]

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: ABC News investigates. NASA going back to the moon. Why two former scientists at the space agency are sounding the alarm.

ELIZABTEH SCHULTZE [TO RASKY]: You'd rate it an F?

DANIEL RASKY: It's an F. It's clear F, clear.

(...)

7:17:55 a.m. [TEASE]

11 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Coming Up; 7:33; Mission to the Moon]

STEPHANOPOULOS: We're also going to have more on that concern about NASA's first crewed mission around the moon in more than 50 years. Two former scientists at the space agency are raising a red flag. They say the mission is tempting fate. We're gonna tell you how NASA is responding.

(...)

7:33:57 a.m.

5 minutes and 4 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: ABC News Investigates; Sounding the Alarm on Mission Back to the Moon]

ELIZABETH JARVIS: We're going to turn now to an ABC News investigation into the mission back to the moon. NASA's Artemis II is set to send astronauts around the moon for the first time in more than 50 years, but now two former scientists at the space agency are sounding the alarm, and Elizabeth Schulze is back with this story. And there's been so much anticipation and excitement around this mission.

SCHULZE: Exactly, Rebecca. A lot of anticipation for this mission that will send astronauts to the moon's orbit. Tomorrow. NASA is scheduled to conduct a dress rehearsal for the Artemis II mission. Its official launch could happen as soon as February 6. We spoke with two former longtime NASA engineers who are worried about the safety of the spacecraft, saying that it could put the astronauts' lives at risk. It's a mission more than five decades in the making. NASA's

Artemis II sending astronauts around the moon for the first time since Apollo 17 in 1972.

GENE CERNAN [on Apollo 17]: Never put a flag up on the moon.

SCHULZE: But this morning, two veteran NASA scientists say they believe there are serious safety risks ahead of the mission's planned launch as soon as next month. [TO CAMARDA] In your view right now, is it safe for astronauts, humans to go on this mission on Artemis 2?

CHARLIE CAMARDA: I would say no.

SCHULZE: Charlie Camarda is a former director of engineering at NASA and a retired. Astronaut who flew on the space shuttle, Daniel Rasky retired in December from the space agency after working as an engineer specializing in thermal heat systems for more than 30 years. [TO RASKY] Is this what you both expected to be doing, speaking out about in retirement?

DANIEL RASKY: No.

CAMARDA: No, no, no.

SCHULZE: Their key concern centers on the Orion spacecraft's heat shield. A system designed to protect astronauts from the extreme heat when they reenter the atmosphere. They say the heat shield uses a material from the 1960s that cracked during the uncrewed Artemis I test flight in 2022, a finding highlighted in a 2024 publicly released report by NASA's Inspector General that was reviewed by Rasky.

RASKY: I have to say from the data I've seen with regard to this heat shield. If I had to rate it A, B, C, D, I'd rate it an F.

SCHULZE [TO RASKY]: You'd rate it an F?

RASKY: It's an F. It's a clear F, clear, and there's no way you put crew on an F heat shield. You are just tempting fate.

SCHULZE: During a pre-launch press conference, NASA acknowledged that the Artemis 2 heat shield has what they called limitations.

JEFF RADIGAN: We understand the limitations of the heat shield Artemis 2, and it's incumbent upon us to fly within those limitations.

SCHULZE: We asked the man in charge of the spacecraft at NASA, Howard Hu, about those limitations and the engineers' concerns.

HOWARD HU: Crew safety is paramount, and our ability to fly our crew safely and ensure their mission success is what we do every day. And I think about it every night, every day, every waking hour.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: ABC News Investigates; Concerns About the Safety of NASA's Artemis II]

SCHULZE: Hu told us NASA conducted an extensive 18-month investigation on the heat shield and identified the root cause of the problem. He said NASA then changed Orion's return path so the astronauts spend less time in high heat zones.

HU: As part of that investigation, they were able to determine that there was limitations that we could take on this current heat shield on Artemis 2 that would be safe.

SCHULZE: In a statement to ABC News, NASA administrator Jared Isaacman said he has full confidence in the heat shield, adding "NASA's engineers and safety experts followed the evidence, challenged every assumption, and applied disciplined engineering judgment to understand the anomaly and mitigate remaining risk."

CAMARDA: I lost three classmates, seven friends on Columbia. And so, you know, I get very emotional. You know, I understand we take risks, but we don't have to take unnecessary risks. And I'm praying for the crew because I don't wanna see that happen.

SCHULZE [TO HU]: The engineers told us they don't want to see a tragedy like we saw with Columbia or Challenger. Can NASA confidently say it's done everything in its power at this point, given those risks to avoid a tragedy like that?

HU: He confidently would say that. I think to a person that was part of the investigation, the technical team, I would say, would definitely say that.

SCHULZE: So, both of the former NASA engineers suggest sending robots on the spacecraft instead of humans. They say that the U.S. was already first to put astronauts on the moon so that there is no rush here. We asked NASA's Howard Hu about that. He said there is no pressure on the timeline of this mission, and if it was not ready to go, NASA would not hesitate to say so.

STEPHANOPOULOS: There are such diametrically opposed positions there.

SCHULZE: Such differences, and the reality is there are risks. How much risk do you take? That's the debate here.

JARVIS: Yeah, always a big question. Elizabeth. Thank you. We're going to see much more of that report from Elizabeth tonight on ABC News Live. Sam?

SAM CHAMPION: I don't know. It seems like a good time for robots.