Response to NASA OIG Report IG-26-010 pursuant to the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Public Law 117-263, Section 5274

Section 5274 of Public Law 117-263, the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, requires Offices of Inspector General (OIG) to notify all non-governmental organizations or business entities that are specifically mentioned in an OIG report. Section 5274 further requires the OIG to attach any response received from a non-governmental organization or business entity to the report in which they are mentioned. Therefore, in accordance with Section 5274, attached is a response provided to NASA OIG regarding the report on NASA's Launch Infrastructure, report number IG-26-010, issued June 22, 2026.

This response represents the views of Virginia Spaceport Authority. NASA OIG did not evaluate this response, offers no comment, and makes no representations, expressed or implied, of any nature with respect to the matters stated therein.

July 16, 2026

Brian Mullins, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Audits
NASA Office of Inspector General
300 Hidden Figures Way SW, Suite 8U37
Washington, DC, 20026

Dear Mr. Mullins:

I have read the "NASA's Launch Infrastructure" (ID-26-010) report and I appreciate an opportunity to comment. I am the CEO and Executive Director of the Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority (d.b.a. "Virginia Spaceport Authority" or "VSA"), a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia. VSA owns and operates the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport (MARS) located at Wallops Flight Facility (WFF).

In reading the report, my greatest concern is that the reader is likely to infer that all launch pads located at Wallops Island are part of NASA's launch infrastructure. In fact, Launch Pads 0A, 0B, 0C, and 0D along with a payload processing facility and an unmanned aerial systems airfield are funded, owned, and operated by VSA as the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport. VSA has an Enhanced Use Lease (EUL) with NASA (GSFC-2025-EUL-0001) for use and occupancy of the land underlying these assets. MARS is licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration for vertical launch to orbit (FAA Launch Site Operator License No. LSO 02-007 (Rev 5)).

The report should strongly emphasize that all the capacity for orbital launch from Wallops Flight Facility is enabled by launch infrastructure owned and operated by the Virginia Spaceport Authority and the Commonwealth of Virginia with no sustaining NASA investment in launch infrastructure.

In addition, I propose the following clarifying and correcting rewrites.

In the "Wallops Flight Facility" section beginning on page 6:

- **Current text:** "*The Wallops Island Launch Site has seven active launch pads—Pad 0A, Pad 0B, Pad 0C, Pad 0D, Pad 1A, Pad 2, and Pad 3.....*" **Suggested rewrite:** The Wallops Island Launch Site has seven active launch pads—Pad 0A, Pad 0B, Pad 0C, Pad 0D, owned and operated by the Virginia Spaceport Authority as part of VSA's Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport; Pad 1A, Pad 2, and Pad 3, owned and operated by NASA.....
- **Current text:** *"The vehicles launched at Wallops vary in size and power from small meteorological rockets to orbital class vehicles that can travel to the International Space Station (ISS) and the Moon*." **Suggested rewrite:** The vehicles launched at Wallops vary in size and power from small meteorological rockets to orbital class vehicles that can travel to the International Space Station (ISS) and the Moon. The orbital class vehicles are launched by the Virginia Spaceport Authority from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport, under Federal Aviation Administration Launch Site Operator License No. LSO 02-007 (Rev 5).

In the "Transition to Commercialization" section beginning on page 8:

- **Current text:** "*Over the last 20 years, NASA's launch complexes at Kennedy and Wallops have increasingly transitioned to commercial partners such as Blue Origin, Firefly Aerospace, Northrop Grumman, Rocket Lab, and SpaceX*." **Suggested rewrite:** Over the last 20 years, NASA's launch complex at Kennedy has increasingly transitioned to commercial partners such as Blue Origin and SpaceX. At Wallops, the Virginia Spaceport Authority holds contracts with commercial launch providers Northrop Grumman, Rocket Lab and Firefly Aerospace.

- **Current text:** "*These commercialization efforts have led to significant increases in the utilization of NASA's launch infrastructure at Kennedy and Wallops*." **Suggested rewrite:** These commercialization efforts have led to significant increases in the utilization of NASA's launch infrastructure at Kennedy and at Virginia Spaceport Authority's launch infrastructure at Wallops.
- **Current text:** "*Since that time, NASA's commercial partners have launched more than 60 missions utilizing Kennedy and Wallops launch complexes to transport supplies and crew to the ISS. Going forward, NASA's commercialization efforts will continue to expand with Kennedy's LC 39A being the launch site for SpaceX's Starship and Wallops hosting commercial launches for companies such as Firefly Aerospace and Rocket Lab*." **Suggested rewrite:** Since that time, NASA's and VSA's commercial partners have launched more than 60 missions utilizing Kennedy's and VSA's launch complexes to transport supplies and crew to the ISS. Going forward, NASA's commercialization efforts will continue to expand with Kennedy's LC 39A being the launch site for SpaceX's Starship. VSA is increasing the number of commercial launches at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport on Wallops Island.
- **Current text:** *"Kennedy entered into a CSLA agreement with SpaceX for LC 39A in 2014, while Wallops entered into an EUL with the Virginia Spaceport Authority to operate Pads 0A and 0B in 2025."* **Suggested rewrite:** Kennedy entered into a CSLA agreement with SpaceX for LC 39A in 2014. The Virginia Spaceport Authority entered into an EUL with NASA in 2025 for the use and occupation of the land underlying VSA's Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport at Wallops.

In addition, the section of the report entitled "Increasing Number of Launches Projected to Exceed Launch Pad Availability" is misleading. VSA's MARS is not expected to reach capacity by 2028. However, VSA currently relies on range services provided by NASA WFF. It is important that NASA operates the range in an efficient manner such that it can support the projected increase in launches at competitive pricing. Most MARS launches carry civil and national security payloads.

If you wish to further discuss my comments and concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (757) 418-7040. I stand ready to assist as needed.

Sincerely,

Roosevelt Mercer, Jr.
Major General, USAF (Ret.)
CEO & Executive Director

cc: Robert H. Steinau, NASA OIG Senior Official

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