



NATIONAL SECURITY SPACE ASSOCIATION
MOORMAN CENTER FOR SPACE STUDIES

BIPARTISAN NEXT STEPS IN NATIONAL SECURITY SPACE

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Recent years have witnessed landmark changes in U.S. national security space management, organization, programs, and activities -- the most noteworthy of which were the creation of the U.S. Space Force (USSF) as a new armed service to organize, train and equip space forces and re-establishment of the U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) to plan and conduct joint and combined military space operations.

One remarkable aspect of this progress is the bipartisan manner in which these accomplishments were achieved. To a large degree, such bipartisanship can be attributed to the fact that several major initiatives to strengthen America's national security space force structure and posture were launched in the latter years of the Obama administration and carried forward throughout the Trump administration. Members of Congress from both parties helped catalyze and provide resources necessary to carry out these important initiatives.

Sustaining bipartisanship on national security space issues must be a top priority of the Biden administration and the new Congress. America's adversaries are expending considerable resources to develop a broad range of space capabilities as well as the means to deny the U.S. freedom of access to, passage through, and operations in space. Indeed, they have tested and deployed anti-satellite and counterspace weapons that threaten use of the defense, intelligence, civil and commercial space systems that America relies upon for its national security and economic well-being. Both China and Russia view the heavy U.S. reliance on vulnerable space systems as a weakness to be exploited to coerce America in times of crisis or conflict.

Simply put, our nation's leaders must ensure that the U.S. national security space program does not become embroiled in partisan politics. They must put the national interest first and attend to the imperative of ensuring that the U.S. is prepared to deter or, if necessary, defeat the threat or use of armed force in outer space. What then should be at the top of the agenda for the U.S. national security space enterprise in the first years of the Biden administration and the 117th Congress? Although much work remains across many fronts, six specific issues require immediate attention and bipartisan solutions.

1 *Complete the build-out of the USSF and USSPACECOM.* The USSF has made significant progress in standing up the first new armed service since 1947. Likewise, USSPACECOM has moved forward with alacrity as a geographic combatant command with responsibility for the space area of operations. That being said, numerous personnel, organizational, and resourcing issues must be addressed to enable the new Service and Unified Command to rapidly mature into efficient, effective, and sustainable military organizations. For example, the Space Force needs to develop and implement plans to assure a continuing pipeline of diverse, highly motivated and technologically savvy Guardians to carry the Nation's first truly digital service into the future, continue incorporating appropriate elements of the other military departments into the Force, and determine the appropriate blend of active duty, guard, and reserve



components. The Biden administration and Democrats and Republicans in Congress should take steps to assure the continued maturation of the USSF and USSPACECOM.

2 *Reform the defense space system acquisition process and structure.* To its credit, Congress opened the door to such reforms by directing the Department of Defense to propose an entirely new process and structure for acquiring space systems. The Department's initial report to Congress was overly narrow in scope and was subsequently withdrawn due to internal disputes. The Biden administration and Congress have a blank slate with which to create a process and structure that provides the required speed, agility, and discipline to deliver more capable, resilient, and affordable space capabilities, including mechanisms to better leverage U.S. commercial space goods and services. Such a structure should also make clear the "lanes in the road" among the many organizations now involved in the acquisition of military space systems. And guiding this overarching acquisition reform effort should be a formal recognition of the importance of a layered approach to space system resilience that blends the best of various architectural and system design approaches such as defense-in-depth, proliferation, and more.

3 *Assure intelligence support to the national security space enterprise.* The U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) -- of which the USSF recently became the 18th member -- must ensure that national security policy-makers, space system acquirers, combatant commanders, space system operators, and intelligence analysts have a timely and accurate understanding of conditions and activities in the space domain as well as adversary space and counterspace capabilities and intentions. The Space Force Intelligence Activity and USSPACECOM's Joint Intelligence Operations Center have been established and discussions are underway regarding creation of a National Space Intelligence Center. Their fiscal and personnel resources and relationships with national intelligence agencies must be determined. The Biden administration and Congress, on a bipartisan basis, can help ensure that the IC prioritizes space intelligence support and allocates the necessary resources for the foundational, scientific and technical, counterintelligence, and operational intelligence collection, analysis and production necessary to prevent surprise, provide indications and warning of attack, support the planning and conduct of national security space operations, and protect U.S. national interests in space against current and emerging threats.

4 *Mature policies, strategies, doctrines, and plans to shape, deter, and if necessary prevail in any conflict that begins in or extends to space.* Once nominated and confirmed, the new Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy, in coordination with other DoD components, must lead a thorough department-wide review and promulgate updated policy and strategy to guide the conduct of U.S. national security space programs and activities. In particular, strategic direction regarding the capabilities, plans, and employment of space forces to deter, respond, and defeat aggression in space must be addressed. The Chief of Space Operations, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary



of the Air Force for Space Architecture and Integration, must implement the strategic direction to properly organize, train, and equip Guardians, develop doctrine to guide how space forces will fight, and deliver the personnel, platforms, weapons systems, and equipment necessary for prompt and sustained space operations. The Commander of USSPACECOM must ensure that effective operations and contingency plans are developed while collaborating with other geographic and functional Combatant Commanders as well as allied and commercial partners to improve global warfighting integration in support of joint and combined all-domain operations.

5 *Properly resource the U.S. Space Force, U.S. Space Command, and the U.S. intelligence space organizations.* The creation of the USSF and USSPACECOM were accompanied by budgetary and other measures to ensure these organizations remain “lean”. No one would dispute the importance of avoiding bloated bureaucracy; however, there is a fine line between “lean” and “unable to effectively perform its mission due to inadequate resources.” As it stands today, the USSF and USSPACECOM are significantly under-resourced in terms of both personnel and funding. While the pace and scope of the threat continues to intensify, neither organization has the full complement of uniformed military and civilian personnel nor the tools needed to effectively protect American interests in space. The Biden administration and Congress must ensure that these new national security space organizations have the resources necessary to perform their vital missions, roles, functions, and tasks.

6 *Continue to ensure the acquisition and operation of leading-edge space intelligence capabilities and enhance collaboration between the U.S. defense and intelligence space sectors.* The National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), a joint activity of the Defense Department and Intelligence Community, must continue to deliver and operate the means to access hostile and denied areas, prevent strategic surprise, provide indications and warning, and collect intelligence information in support of national decision-makers, diplomats, and the military. In recent years, the NRO has worked closely with the USSF and USSPACECOM on a range of national security space matters, including streamlined command and control arrangements in the event of a crisis or conflict involving space. The Biden administration and Congress should promote continued collaboration and, as appropriate, further integration of defense and intelligence space architectures and activities.

None of these challenges will be easy to solve, especially in an era of declining Defense budgets. Yet they must be addressed if America is to retain its strategic advantage in space. The fact that America’s elected leaders came together in a bipartisan manner, across multiple administrations and Congresses, to begin the process of addressing shortcomings in our national security space program yields ample reason for hope they can continue to do so. Now is the time to finish the job.