

Reestablishing U.S. Space Command

By Gary Shugart

Since June 2018 there has been a continuous stream of activity related to U.S. military space organization and management. That month, President Donald J. Trump verbally directed the Department of Defense (DoD) to immediately begin the process of establishing a Space Force as the sixth military service.¹

While the creation of this force is debated, the DoD needs to quickly take steps to improve space warfighting capabilities by standing up U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM)–again. Based on increasing adversary capabilities, first demonstrated by China’s 2007 launch of an anti-satellite weapon that destroyed one of its own satellites, DoD is moving to better avoid and prepare for conflicts in space. The reestablishment of USSPACECOM aims to accelerate the integration of the space domain into the joint war fight.²

To do this, the new USSPACECOM will need to be much different than the USSPACECOM of 1985-2002. In 2002, with the establishment of Northern Command, USSPACECOM roles were aligned underneath U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), similar to the more recent startup of U.S. Cyber Command. The 9/11 attacks required that critical assets be focused on terrorism and homeland defense, and space utilization was de-emphasized. Yet, adversaries’ space capabilities continued to grow and present more and more challenges that the United States did not have answers to.

The USSPACECOM of tomorrow cannot simply be a replica of what it once was. The assumed intent of such an organization cannot be to catch up to existing capabilities but rather to advance America’s position to one of assured space dominance in support of the warfighter and national defense.

More Than a New Organization

To make this leap and adequately address space threats, DoD must do more than create a new organization. The department must distinctly define what the roles of the new USSPACECOM will be, what operational and developmental gaps it needs to address, and resource it according to the desired space dominance effect. This will help to ensure that long-range planning functions continue to keep the United States ahead of adversaries in providing, operating and defending space capabilities.

As we look to the future, it is instructive to review the past.

In 1999, U.S. Space Command was the combatant command responsible for space operations in what at that time was a benign environment. That same year, the fiscal year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act established the Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization (also known as the “Rumsfeld Space Commission”).³ The commission report was released in January 2001 and unanimously concluded the security and well-being of the United States and its allies and friends depended on the nation’s ability to operate in space.

The commission further stated, “With the growing dependence on space and the vulnerability of space-related assets, more attention needs to be given to deploying and employing space-based capabilities for deterrence and defense.”⁴

While the report highlighted the need for the nation to pay more attention to space, the 9/11 attacks drove changes to the Unified Command Plan (UCP) that disestablished USSPACECOM. The following 16 years have seen the space mission area struggle to handle the challenges resulting from a rapidly evolving space domain.

The Rumsfeld Space Commission report provided numerous recommendations for space management and reorganization that remain valid today. Very few of those recommendations were implemented because the nation's focus shifted to counter-terrorism and homeland defense following the 9/11 attacks.

The 2002 UCP, signed by President George W. Bush in April 2002, established U.S. Northern Command in October of that year. In July 2002, the President signed Change 1 to the UCP that created a "new" USSTRATCOM with responsibilities for the nuclear missions of the "old" USSTRATCOM and space operations missions previously assigned to USSPACECOM.⁵

The majority of the military personnel assigned to the USSPACECOM staff in Colorado Springs were not reassigned to USSTRATCOM at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., and only a handful of the civilian employees elected to move. USSTRATCOM had to manage the space missions with a significantly smaller number of people dispersed throughout the USSTRATCOM staff.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's appointment of Marine Corps Gen. James Cartwright as the commander of USSTRATCOM in September 2004 resulted in additional challenges for the space mission area. To manage the multiple USSTRATCOM missions, Cartwright delegated authority for operational and tactical level planning, force execution and day-to-day management of forces to Joint Functional Component Commands (JFCC) while retaining responsibility for strategic-level integration and advocacy of Unified Command Plan-assigned missions at Headquarters USSTRATCOM. The space and global strike operations missions were combined into the Joint Functional Component Command for Space and Global Strike (JFCC SGS).

The commander of JFCC SGS was located at Barksdale Air Force Base, La., and dual-hatted as the 8th Air Force commander responsible for Air Force strategic bombers. He leveraged the 8th Air Force staff to support the global strike mission while the space staff remained located at Headquarters USSTRATCOM and consisted of a sub-set of the same individuals who had been working the USSTRATCOM space mission since 2002.

In early 2005, USSTRATCOM issued a modification to its operations order making the commander of JFCC SGS the USSTRATCOM space coordinating authority (SCA), responsible for coordinating USSTRATCOM space operations with the other combatant commanders. The modification also directed JFCC SGS to establish a Joint Space Operations Center (JSpOC) and authorized delegation of SCA to the 14th Air Force commander, located at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.

That May, the JFCC SGS commander appointed the 14th Air Force commander as the Commander, Joint Space Operations (CDRJSO). CDRJSO was tasked to provide all combatant commands with requested space support. The JFCC SGS commander established the JSpOC at Vandenberg AFB and authorized CDRJSO to collaborate and coordinate across the JFCC SGS staff, contributing service component staffs assigned to USSTRATCOM, combatant

commanders (through their SCA) and other DoD and non-DoD partners to ensure unity of effort for space support to military and other national security operations.

A year later, Cartwright disestablished JFCC SGS and established the Joint Functional Component Command for Space (JFCC Space) at Vandenberg with the 14th Air Force commander in charge.

Space Expertise

Just as with the disestablishment of USSPACECOM, there was little flow of space expertise from Headquarters USSTRATCOM to fill JFCC Space staff billets. The JFCC Space commander relied heavily on the 14th Air Force staff to conduct space planning and operations while USTRATCOM worked to obtain additional joint manning for JFCC Space. Over the next 11 years JFCC Space never exceeded 256 joint billets, allocated between the command's staff and the five JFCC Space operations centers (Missile Warning Center, Joint Navigation Warfare Center, JSpOC, Joint Overhead Persistent Infrared Center and National Space Defense Center).⁶

In December of 2017, USSTRATCOM established the Joint Force Space Component Commander (JFSCC) and transitioned the JFCC Space staff to become the JFSCC staff. Through all these transitions, the space mission has never had the necessary manning to keep pace with the rapid pace of change being dictated by adversaries.

Because few organizational changes have been made above the U.S. Strategic Command level, Congress continues to direct studies to examine what it sees as continuing problems with DoD space management and organization. A July 2016 United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report stated, "We and others have reported for over two decades that fragmentation and overlap in DoD space acquisition management and oversight have contributed to program delays and cancellation, cost increases, and inefficient operations."⁷

The GAO report also identified and examined several potential approaches to reforming DoD space acquisitions that were suggested and supported by DoD and expert officials. One of those recommendations was to establish a Space Force to provide a new military department for the space domain.⁸ The House of Representatives version of the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) acted on that recommendation with language directing the creation of a stand-alone "space corps" within the Department of the Air Force.⁹

While the language did not survive, the 2018 NDAA did direct the Deputy Secretary of Defense to "conduct a review and identify a recommended organizational and management structure for the national security space components of the Department of Defense . . ." and provide a final report to Congress.¹⁰

On Aug. 9, 2018, the Deputy Secretary of Defense's *Final Report on Organizational and Management Structure for the National Security Space Components of the Department of Defense* was submitted.¹¹ The report states, "Establishing the Space Force will be multi-dimensional and phased. In this first phase, using existing authorities, the DoD will establish several of the component parts of the Space Force. The second phase requires Congress to combine these components into the sixth branch of the Armed Forces."¹²

DoD has begun pursuing the following four actions identified in the final report.

1. DoD will reestablish the unified combatant command U.S. Space Command, led by a four-star general or flag officer, to lead the use of space assets in warfighting

and accelerate integration of space capabilities into other warfighting forces. DoD will recommend that the President revise the Unified Command Plan to create USSPACECOM by the end of calendar year 2018. Initially, DoD will recommend that the Air Force Space Command commander be dual-hatted as the commander of the unified command. Subsequent commanders will be single-hatted.

2. DoD will establish a Space Development Agency (SDA) to develop and field space capabilities at speed and scale. DoD leadership will establish the SDA and will identify the governance, structure, location, skills and talent-management required. The SDA will be similar in style and intent to the Air Force Rapid Capabilities Office which provides a model for the thinking, execution style, reporting structure and innovation required for creating warfighting dominance, and the DoD Strategic Capabilities Office which leverages existing DoD technologies to rapidly field new capabilities.
3. DoD will develop the Space Operations Force to support the combatant commands. These joint space warfighters will provide space expertise to combatant commanders and the SDA, and surge expertise in time of crisis to ensure that space capabilities are leveraged effectively in conflict. The Space Operations Force will be composed of space personnel from all military services. They will be managed as one community by USSPACECOM with civilian oversight from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, while personnel remain in their respective services until the establishment of the sixth military department. Additionally, USSPACECOM will be prepared to deploy teams of space experts to U.S. European Command and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command no later than the summer of 2019.
4. DoD will create the governance, services and support functions of the sixth military department, the Space Force. Many of these conditions will require changes to U.S. law. DoD will build a legislative proposal for congressional consideration as a part of the fiscal year 2020 budget cycle.

Transition and timing to the sixth branch of the armed forces will be paced by the scaling and effectiveness of the Space Defense Agency and the Space Operations Force. Each of the existing military services will be required to provide expertise to support recruiting, legal, financial management, logistics, medical and human resources functions within the Space Force.¹³

U.S. Space Command—Again

President Trump signed the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 on Aug. 13, 2018. Section 1601 directs the President, through the Secretary of Defense, to establish within U.S. Strategic Command a sub-unified command to be known as the U.S. Space Command.¹⁴ Senior White House and DoD officials are working with Congress to determine if USSPACECOM can be established as a unified command rather than a sub-unified command as directed by the act.

The 2019 NDAA states the commander of Air Force Space Command (AFSPC) may serve as USSPACECOM commander for a three-year period following establishment of USSPACECOM. After that period, one individual may not concurrently serve as both

commanders. With the AFSPC commander currently dual-hatted as the Joint Force Space Component Commander under USSTRATCOM, if this individual becomes the first USSPACE commander, it provides an ideal bridge and helps to ensure that continuity is sustained.

The management of the Space Operations Force by USSPACECOM will provide the human capital needed to develop, field and integrate space capabilities into multi-domain warfighting. After three years, the commander of USSPACECOM will no longer be dual-hatted as the Air Force Space Command leader and will be solely focused on what is needed to operate into, in and through the space domain, today and into the future.

The Rumsfeld Space Commission identified the need in 2001 to deploy and employ space-based capabilities for deterrence and defense. Now is the time for the next USSPACECOM to become more than just a provider of space capabilities and services. The next USSPACECOM will need to field capabilities to deter our adversaries from attacking our vital on-orbit space systems, and should deterrence fail, have the capability to defend our space systems. This will require enhanced space situational awareness capabilities to monitor adversary activities in space. It will also require increased coordination among all the U.S. combatant commanders, the National Reconnaissance Office and the intelligence community, to ensure USSPACECOM has insight into any activities the United States and its allies may be conducting that could impact the space domain.

Whatever structures are established in the future, there is no denying that space has become a key contributor to the information, economic and military success of the United States. As we move forward we need to learn from the past and posture the nation's space capabilities for future success.

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¹ Oriana Pawlyk, "It's Official: Trump Announces Space Force as 6th Military Branch," *Military.com*, June 18, 2018, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/06/18/its-official-trump-announces-space-force-6th-military-branch.html>.

² Department of Defense, *Final Report on Organizational and Management Structure for the National Security Space Components of the Department of Defense* (Washington: Aug. 9, 2018), pg. 6, <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Aug/09/2001952764/-1/-1/1/ORGANIZATIONAL-MANAGEMENT-STRUCTURE-DOD-NATIONAL-SECURITY-SPACE-COMPONENTS.PDF>.

³ Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization, *Report of the Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization* (Washington: Jan. 11, 2001), pg. vii, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a404328.pdf>.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. xxii.

⁵ Edward J. Drea, Ronald H. Cole, Walter S. Poole, James F. Schnabel, Robert J. Watson and Willard J. Webb, *History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946-2012* (Washington: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, 2013), pg. 86.

⁶ JFSCC J1 staff, discussion with the author, Feb. 2, 2018.

⁷ Government Accountability Office, *Defense Space Acquisitions: Too Early to Determine If Recent Changes Will Resolve Persistent Fragmentation in Management and Oversight* (Washington: GAO-16-592R, July 27, 2016), pg. 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 4.

⁹ Sandra Erwin, “Congressman Rogers: A Space Corps Is ‘Inevitable,’” *Space News*, Dec. 2, 2017, <http://spacenews.com/congressman-rogers-a-space-corps-is-inevitable>.

¹⁰ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, Public Law 115-91, 115th Cong., 1st sess. (Dec. 12, 2017), pg. 439.

¹¹ DoD, pg. 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, pg. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pg. 11.

¹⁴ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, Public Law 115-232, 115th Cong., 2nd session (Aug. 13, 2018), pg. 466.