

# Fact Sheet: U.S. Space Force

President Donald Trump plans to create a new branch of the military, the Space Force. This includes the creation of a new Unified Combatant Command, the United States Space Command. The new command reflects growing government concerns about our nation's ability to safeguard unfettered U.S. military and commercial access to space in the face of growing technological capabilities of potential rivals.

## Background

On October 23, 2018, President Donald Trump announced his plan to create both a new branch of the military, the Space Force, within the Department of the Air Force, as well as a new Unified Combatant Command, the U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM).<sup>i</sup> This is the first new branch of the military formed since the Air Force was created in 1947 from the U.S. Army Air Corps. USSPACECOM will become the eleventh Unified Combatant Command. President Trump issued his directive to create USSPACECOM on December 18, 2018.<sup>ii</sup>

On February 19, 2019, the White House issued "Space Policy Directive-4: Establishment of the United States Space Force,"<sup>iii</sup> which lays out the scope and structure of the new military branch and command and calls for the enactment of any legislation necessary to consolidate all military space-related activities within the new organizations. In citing the need for the new Space Force, the memorandum states "Although United States space systems have historically maintained a technological advantage over those of our potential adversaries, those potential adversaries are now advancing their space capabilities and actively developing ways to deny our use of space in a crisis or conflict. It is imperative that the United States adapt its national security organizations, policies, doctrine, and capabilities to deter aggression and protect our interests."

Space Policy Directive-4 states that "'United States Space Force' refers to a new branch of the United States Armed Forces to be initially placed by statute within the Department of the Air Force."<sup>iv</sup> President Trump envisions that his Space Force will eventually be its own military branch co-equal with the existing services.

## The Role of Space Force and U.S. Space Command

There has been growing criticism over the last two decades both inside and outside government about a lack of coordination in addressing problems in space-related activities. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) and others have found that fragmentation and duplication in national security space program acquisition and oversight have contributed to program delays, cancellations, cost increases, and inefficient operations. In a March 2019 presentation to Congress, GAO gave several examples of cost overruns and scheduling delays that occurred in Defense Department space programs:

- Cost of the Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) satellite program grew 117 percent and its first satellite was launched more than 3.5 years late;
- Cost of the Space Based Infrared System (SBIRS) missile warning satellite program grew 265 percent and the launch of the first satellite was delayed roughly 9 years;

- The Global Positioning System (GPS) III program has experienced an almost 4-year delay due to technical issues and cost growth of about 32 percent.<sup>v</sup>

There are also concerns about Defense Department and Air Force responses to perceived growth in the space threat to U.S. national security from potential adversaries – Russia, China, and increasingly North Korea and Iran. Once viewed as a region dominated by the United States due to our technical superiority, space is now increasingly viewed as a potential new area for conflict.

It is impossible to know at this time whether the greater centralization and coordination promised by the new organizational arrangement under Space Force and USSPACECOM will improve the acquisition and management of Defense Department space programs or enhance our nation's abilities to address the potentially aggressive use of space by other countries. One historical example raises concerns. Since the National Security Act of 1947 created the U.S. Air Force each of the other services – Army, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard – have maintained their independent air arms, often with duplicative acquisition programs and overlapping mission capabilities.

From a budgetary standpoint, while the initial funding requests for Space Force and USSPACECOM are modest – \$306 million in Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) – it remains to be seen what will happen as these new organizations begin to compete with existing military services and agencies. While no long-term budgetary projections exist, elevating Space Force to a new military branch will be costly. For example, the Pentagon's FY20 request for each existing military department are \$191.4 billion for the Army, \$205.6 billion for the Navy, and \$204.8 billion for the Air Force.<sup>vi</sup> And while some of these funds, particularly from the Air Force budget, will be shifted into the newest branch of the military, elevating Space Force to co-equal status with the existing services will place additional budgetary demands on the Pentagon.

### Space Force in the Trump Administration's Fiscal Year 2020 Request

The Trump Administration is requesting \$306 million for Space Force and related activities in FY20. This includes \$72.4 million to "stand up" the new Space Force headquarters within the Department of the Air Force. According to the Pentagon, this will enable Space Force "to seamlessly accept responsibilities for acquisition programs and operational missions as soon as FY2021." The plan is to do this with 160 people, of whom 120 will be current Defense Department employees transferred from other functions and 40 will be new hires into additional permanent billets. The Pentagon is also requesting \$149.8 million for an associated "Space Development Agency" (SDA) and \$83.8 million to establish U.S. Space Command.<sup>vii</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> "President Donald J. Trump Is Launching America's Space Force." The White House, October 23, 2018. Accessed March 20, 2019.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-launching-americas-space-force/>

<sup>ii</sup> "Text of a Memorandum from the President to the Secretary of Defense Regarding the Establishment of the United States Space Command." The White House, December 18, 2018. Accessed March 20, 2019.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/text-memorandum-president-secretary-defense-regarding-establishment-united-states-space-command/>

<sup>iii</sup> "Text of Space Policy Directive-4: Establishment of the United States Space Force." The White House, February 19, 2019. Accessed March 20, 2019.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/text-space-policy-directive-4-establishment-united-states-space-force/>

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> "Space Acquisitions: DOD Faces Significant Challenges as it Seeks to Accelerate Space Programs and Address Threats." Government Accountability Office. Accessed March 30, 2019.

<https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-458T>

<sup>vi</sup> "Defense Department Budget Overview, Fiscal Year 2020." Defense Department. Accessed March 15, 2019.

[https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2020/fy2020\\_Budget\\_Request\\_Overview\\_Book.pdf](https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2020/fy2020_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> "Space Force Headquarters Costs, Fiscal Year 2020." Taxpayers for Common Sense, March 13, 2019. Accessed March 17, 2019.

<https://www.taxpayer.net/national-security/space-force-headquarters-costs/>