



Tue March 31, 2009

SPACE NEWS Business Report

- Launch Industry
- Market Monitor
- Military Space
- Remote Sensing
- Satellite Comm.
- Space Policy

Americas

Europe

Asia

[Space News Business](#)

OpEd: Space Policy Shouldn't Follow the Money

By [VICTORIA SAMSON](#) and [LAURA PETERSON](#)posted: 17 March 2009
12:02 pm ET

Though policymakers across the political spectrum agree that space is crucial to the U.S. economy and military, consensus on how to direct decisions and dollars is harder to come by.

The administration of U.S. President Barack Obama has promised on the new White House Web site to "restore American leadership on space issues, seeking a worldwide ban on weapons that interfere with military and commercial satellites." But a new Joint Chiefs of Staff publication on space operations shows the Pentagon may be planning otherwise. The doctrine lists "Active and offensive measures to deceive, disrupt, deny, degrade, or destroy an adversary's space capabilities" (bold-face in the original) as elements of defensive space control, the mission area in the defense budget dedicated to protecting U.S. space assets from harm. This position is echoed in the sections on offensive space control and space situational awareness, which is usually seen as a nonhostile capability but defined by the Pentagon in terms of space control capabilities.

When doctrines collide, there is an easy way to see where policy is headed: Follow the money. A soon-to-be-released analysis by independent watchdog Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS) reveals that a rapidly growing portion of military space spending is concentrated on space control programs. Unclassified space control programs have increased more than 37 percent over the past five years to nearly \$1 billion in fiscal year 2009, according to TCS. Space situational awareness programs have jumped by 35 percent to nearly \$560 million. Sadly, the United States taxpayer often gets a very low return on military space investments. These acquisition programs have reached new heights in terms of expense and wasteful procurement. The Government Accountability Office rather brusquely noted in a report last spring that "DOD's space system acquisitions have experienced problems over the past several decades that have driven up costs by hundreds of millions, even billions, of dollars; stretched schedules by years; and increased performance risks." Furthermore, this money was being spent even though often "capabilities have not been delivered to the warfighter after decades of development."

Defensive and offensive space control programs are among

Contact:

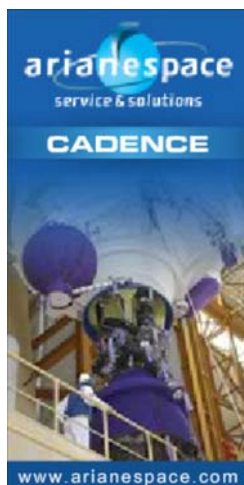
Get Your L

Subscribe

Advertise

Space News A
Search the Sp
Archives





those that have seen the most breakneck growth in recent years. For example, the Air Force's Space Control Technologies program element increased 570 percent from fiscal years 2005 to 2009, while the Army's Ground-Based Space Control Systems project increased 650 percent during that same time. Space situational awareness programs swelled with the help of several congressional earmarks, which in the absence of a coherent strategy probably did more to help their districts than protect U.S. satellites.

The combination of a policy vacuum and an inability to field space programs quickly and effectively is another reason why the United States should not throw money at programs that could lead down the road to weaponization. The U.S. government has historically refused to discuss international treaties that would prevent attacks on satellites, though we would have the most to lose were space to become a shooting gallery. This is particularly true considering the crucial role hundreds of commercial satellites play in the U.S. economy.

While the Obama statement does not indicate whether the administration would pursue a treaty or multilateral agreement amongst major space powers, it does acknowledge the need for U.S. involvement and pledge to "thoroughly assess possible threats to U.S. space assets and the best options, military and diplomatic, for countering them." Assessment is a good first step, but if Obama wants to truly lead in space, he too should follow the money. Space spending needs guidance from a national security space strategy to measure success. Applying discipline to the space budget and bringing spending in line with policy should be the second step in Obama's plan.

Victoria Samson is a senior analyst at the Center for Defense Information. Laura Peterson is a senior policy analyst at Taxpayers for Common Sense.



[About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [DMCA/Copyright](#) | [Subscription Agreement](#)

[SPACE.com](#) | [LiveScience.com](#) | [Space News](#)
[Orion Telescopes & Binoculars](#) | [Starry Night](#) | [LiveScience Store](#)

© Imaginova Corp. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

