

National Security Space and Missile Defense Programs Budget Request
House Armed Services Committee
Strategic Forces Subcommittee
May 21, 2009

Chair: Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-CA) ([opening statement](#))
Ranking Member: Michael Turner (R-OH) ([opening statement](#))

Witnesses

Gen. C. Robert Kehler, Commander, Air Force Space Command ([prepared statement](#))
Lt. Gen. Patrick O'Reilly, Director, Missile Defense Agency ([prepared statement](#))

Background

Rep. Tauscher explained that ordinarily the subcommittee would hold separate hearings on the budget requests for national security space programs and missile defense, but because the FY2010 budget was submitted to Congress so much later than usual, it was necessary to combine the hearings in order to meet the committee's deadline for marking up the FY2010 DOD authorization bill. Most of the hearing was devoted to missile defense issues, which are outside the scope of this hearing summary. Only the space-related aspects of the hearing are summarized here. See the [webcast](#) of this hearing for more information (scroll down to May 21, 2009, 2:00 pm).

The national security space budget is very difficult to follow because "space" is not a line item in DOD's budget or that of the intelligence community, and because a significant portion of the budget is for classified programs. During her opening statement, Rep. Tauscher provided the total that is being requested for unclassified programs in FY2010 -- \$11 billion. Historically, a rule of thumb is that the total budget for classified and unclassified national security space programs is roughly twice that of the unclassified budget, but until the actual figures are published in the annual [Aeronautics and Space Report of the President](#), there is no way to know for certain. The most recent edition of that report is for FY2007.

Nuggets

Rep. Tauscher revealed that the total FY2010 budget request for **UNCLASSIFIED** national security space programs is \$11 billion.

Gen. Kehler stated that he is "highly confident" that there will not be a gap in coverage in the GPS navigation satellite system as suggested by a recent GAO report.

Hearing Highlights for Space-Related Issues

National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS)

Rep. Tauscher asked Gen. Kehler for his recommendations on how to proceed with the NPOESS program, whose cost has grown from \$6.5 billion to \$13.5 billion, and the schedule for the first launch has slipped from 2011 to 2014. She stated that the tri-agency (DOD-NOAA-NASA) acquisition approach is dysfunctional. He said that the need for the weather data for both the Earth and the space environment remains very high, and the Air Force is not happy with the NPOESS program either. He noted the DOD still has three of its own legacy weather satellites (DMSP) and they are managing the time frames of those launches to hedge their bets about when the first NPOESS will be launched. He said that the most recent study on what to do with NPOESS is nearly completed and he would have to wait to be briefed on its results before making any recommendations. Rep. Tauscher asked if that would be before the scheduled June 2 subcommittee markup of the bill and he replied that he hoped so.

Global Positioning System (GPS)

In response to a question from Rep. Tauscher, Gen. Kehler assured her that despite a recent GAO report that suggested there might be a “gap” in coverage from the GPS system of navigation satellites, he is “highly confident” that the Air Force will be able to sustain more than the minimum of 24 satellites needed for global coverage. There are 30 active satellites in orbit now, and three additional are available. He said that while the Air Force does not take exception to the GAO report, some of it is “old news.” He noted that the Air Force is well aware that GPS is critical not only to the military but to the entire world. (*The GAO report on GPS was a focus of a [hearing](#) before a subcommittee of the House Oversight and Government Reform on May 7, 2009.*) The GAO report is based on a very, very conservative analysis that is used for planning purposes, but it does not take into account the real steps we take to manage the constellation, according to Gen. Kehler.

Transformational Satellite (TSAT) Program

Rep. Tauscher and Rep. Turner both noted in their opening statements that DOD has recommended termination of the Transformational Satellite (TSAT) communications program and asked Gen. Kehler to explain how this would affect the ability to provide protected communications, and the disposition of the technology already developed under that program. In response to Rep. Larsen (D-WA), Gen. Kehler said that the technology developed under TSAT would be “harvested” for use in other programs, such as the Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) and the Wideband Gapfiller Satellite (WGS) programs. (*DOD is proposing to cancel TSAT and procure another AEHF instead. AEHF is the follow-on to the existing Milstar system. TSAT was intended to be the successor to AEHF, making a revolutionary jump to optical instead of radio frequency communications*). Decisions still need to be made as to how to infuse those technologies into AEHF and perhaps WGS, according to Gen. Kehler, who added

that the Air Force does not want to make the same mistake it has made in the past of having “requirements that we can’t quite get our arms around at this point.” Rep. Larsen replied “we don’t want to help you make those mistakes.”

Space Situational Awareness (SSA)

In their opening statements, Rep. Tauscher and Rep. Turner both noted the increase in funding for SSA, whose budget would be doubled. Rep. Lamborn (R-CO) asked Gen. Kehler to explain how those funds would be used, and how they would prevent collisions like the recent one between an active U.S. Iridium satellite and a dead Russian satellite.

Gen. Kehler explained that the Air Force tracks more than 19,000 objects in space and that the funds would be used for increased computer capability and the number of analysts working to determine when collisions might occur. He said that the Air Force needed to learn how to use existing sensors better and, for FY2010, to bring more sensors into the mixture. The near term investment is to make the operations center better, he said.

Operationally Responsive Space (ORS)

Rep. Heinrich (D-NM) asked why ORS was not adequately funded in the FY2010 request, noting that it is the third of 20 items on the Air Force’s [unfunded priorities list](#). Gen. Kehler repeated what he and other DOD officials had said at other hearings – the Air Force is building the first operational ORS satellite, ORS Sat-1, on a milestone basis. If the satellite successfully passes the next milestone this summer, the Air Force will seek funding to continue that satellite and build a second satellite that is needed to fulfill the requirements of U.S. Central Command.

(Text in italics is provided for clarity.)

May 28, 2009