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THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT OF THE NATIONAL SPACE COUNCIL

Creation of a US Space Force: Needs and Perspectives

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF

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Introduction:

Vice President Pence, Cabinet Secretaries, members of the National Space Council, ladies and gentlemen. I am pleased to join Lt Gen McLaughlin, and Mr Sirangelo to provide my perspectives on the need for a US Space Force, an issue critical to the U.S.'s future leadership in space and our security in the world. This is a discussion which is long overdue. I especially want to thank President Trump for moving this debate onto the national stage. To be clear, this is not a new subject—it has been talked about for years, in fact for decades, inside the national defense space community. During my time at the Pentagon under the last administration the need to re-think how the Department of Defense (DoD) organizes for space was a topic of considerable debate—but was unfortunately left unresolved. So, I am particularly grateful that with the President's help, we can now bring the discussion into the public square to educate all Americans on why this is important, why they should care, and most of all, why now is the time to act.

Before I do that, I think it is important for me to describe just briefly a bit of my background. Because my discussion here today was not shaped in just the last few months as this topic was thrust into the news, nor over my prior four years in the Pentagon in charge of Space Policy. Rather it is the sum of nearly 30 years of working continuously in National Security Space from inside the DoD and the Intelligence Community both in uniform and as a civilian; from having been involved in nearly every DoD space organizational debate since 1994; from working around the world with space-inclined allies and partners; from being able to engage domestically with every segment of the space community from the largest defense contractor to the smallest entrepreneurial firm; and to do so alongside nearly every agency and branch of government involved in space; and with members of both parties.

I would stop on this last item to make an important point—in my mind, how the DoD organizes for space is not a partisan issue; and it is my hope that it does not become one. Because if it does, and if that causes us fail to address it now, the next time we enter the discussion, US leadership may have already been lost.

The Need for Change:

With that as prelude, let me make it clear where I stand. The US needs a Space Force; a Department within the DoD whose sole focus is US leadership in, and defense of, the domain of space. Now, I do not come to this conclusion lightly. Such a change is monumental—in fact, unprecedented in the history of the DoD. While some point to this as akin to the change we made in 1947 creating the US Air Force, the fact of the matter is that this is far more complex. The Air Force had been in existence as an independent arm of the Army for many years prior to creating the Air Force, beginning in 1918 with the creation of the Air Service, followed by the Army Air Corps in 1926, and the Army Air Forces in 1941. The National Security Act of 1947 was simply formal recognition of what already existed—an organization that had fought and prevailed in World War II.

To be sure, this slow methodical evolution from a service, to a corps, to a separate force would have been the preferred path for a U.S. Space Force had it begun two decades ago. Regrettably, we collectively rejected that preferred path, and squandered that opportunity, first when it was offered from inside the Air Force by then Chief of Staff General Ron Fogleman in 1996¹, and again in 2001 when it was recommended by the Congressionally chartered Rumsfeld

¹ Fogleman, Ron and Widnall, Sheila, “Global Engagement: A vision for the 21st Century Air Force”, November 26, 1996

Commission². But now, after more than a generation of delay, we can no longer be satisfied with that more balanced pace. Instead, we need to make up for lost time by pushing forward forcefully, yet wisely—for our adversaries are not waiting for us to catch up.

The need for this dramatic change is bolstered by every authoritative study external to DoD over multiple decades which has looked at this issue. Every one, every single one, points to the erosion of U.S. national security space leadership and the necessity to dramatically reorganize how we manage space within the DoD. While they may differ on the exact form and timing of that reorganization, the unwavering consensus is that drastic change is needed.

But a Space Force?

As we work towards addressing this problem, some have asked if we really need to take the step to a separate department or if other less dramatic changes might address the problem. The recently released DoD report pointed to four steps³ that could be taken internal to DoD that many believe would address the issues but stop short of creating a new department. To be sure, several of the changes recommended by that report—the creation of a new Combatant Command for Space and the creation of a Space Development Agency—are positive steps and do begin to address some of the problems prior studies have cited⁴. In fact, regardless of whether the Congress sees fit to create a new department, the creation of a new Space Combatant Command remains a critical step. On the other hand, the creation of a Space Development Agency would

² Formally known as “The Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization”, pursuant to Public Law 106-65

³ Department of Defense, “Final Report on Organizational and Management Structure for the National Security Space Components of the Department of Defense”, August 9, 2018 pursuant to Public Law 115-91

⁴ The other two steps, the creation of a Space Operations Force and the establishment of a civilian governance structure, were both proposed in the report in such a manner as to not be able to be evaluated for their impact. However, they are nearly identical to several prior administrative steps taken within the DoD over the last 20 years to try to address this issue such as the creation of a space cadre after the Rumsfeld Report, or the most recent standup of a Principal DoD Space Advisor. In each case they were ineffective and historical evidence suggests is that these proposals would meet a similar fate.

be redundant, and disruptive to the stand up of a new department, so that step would be called for only if the move to a new department was rejected. But neither of these changes, while individually positive, get to the very heart of the issues that must be addressed if we are to assure continued U.S. leadership.

It is on this point that we must focus—the true issues we face—to understand why a Space Force is needed. Many would point to the speed and cost of space acquisition as the single primary issue that must be addressed, and therefore the creation of a Space Development Agency solves the problem. I strongly and emphatically disagree. While there is little doubt that space acquisition is slow and expensive, we must understand that this is merely a symptom, not the cause, of the problem. The issues we face are far more basic and far more tightly enmeshed in the structure of how the DoD and the Air Force manage space—they cannot be solved by simple palliatives. In fact, they do not differ greatly from the same issues that impelled us to create a separate Air Force in 1947—which is why a similar approach is called for.

Issues that Must be Addressed:

The issues faced within DoD that have restricted our ability to stay in the lead are abundant, but they stem from three basic and fundamental causes:

- The lack of organizational identity and jealous advocacy for space
- The absence of true space doctrine
- The need for a space professional cadre

Time and space do not permit a thorough discussion of each of these issues here—they are complex, multifaceted, and deeply tied to the fiber of how we organize, train, and equip U.S.

space forces⁵. To be sure, each of these issues could be solved to some extent by lesser administrative or organizational steps than to create a new department. But to address them correctly and permanently, without fear that changes would be undone in future DoD reorganizations or as the gaze of Congress or the President moved to more pressing problems, the establishment of a new department is necessary.

A separate department brings with it the organizational identity and advocacy for its domain—that is true for the Army with regard to land warfare, for the Navy with regard to maritime operations, and for the Air Force with regard to air combat. The same would be true for a Space Force. Evolutionary and revolutionary changes in the character of war in each of these domains, whether as reactions to new threats or as new technological opportunity arise, are best met by organizations singularly focused on those changes. The DoD lacks that focus today, with no agency⁶ or service focused on space as its single *raison d'être*.

The issue of the necessity for doctrinal development for space defense, space deterrence, and space warfighting is disturbingly underappreciated within the DoD but is crucial to forging future leadership. Doctrine determines how we train, what we buy, who we hire, and the way we plan—yet fundamental doctrine for space is missing. Literally scores of student papers and stacks of scholarly books have been written asking the question, “Who will be the Mahan or Clausewitz for space.” All without answer. And the reason is simple. Doctrine is written by domain focused services—land doctrine by the Army, naval doctrine by the Navy, and air doctrine by the Air Force. Without doctrine we can’t understand the basis of choices, the need

⁵ For example, I published a discussion of the first of these issues in the June 25, 2018 issue of Space News Magazine entitled “Why the United States needs a Space Force”, which can be found here: <https://spacenews.com/why-the-united-states-needs-a-space-force/>

⁶ Actually, the DoD’s National Reconnaissance Office focuses solely on space, and they demonstrate exactly the organizational identity and jealous advocacy traits discussed here, but focused on space intelligence, not warfighting.

for change, the way to grow people, or even the way to best organize our defense. But in a classic “Catch-22” dilemma, without a space service we cannot create space doctrine, and without doctrine, we cannot clearly define the design for a service. A Space Force fixes this issue.

Finally, and most basically, the job of any service is to build the cadre of individuals who will keep us in the lead. Today, we attempt to grow space expertise in the Air Force and the Army⁷ but without the weight of conviction that this cadre is central to the service, nor by taking the steps that would clearly differentiate a space career path from that of their service brethren. It is likely that the creation of a Space Corps within the Air Force could somewhat address this issue, stopping short of a new department. But the ideal career pattern for a space professional is so different than that of an air professional, it stretches credulity that the Air Force could make that work.

In fact, this was one of the primary findings of prior studies, that we needed a separate cadre development path for space professionals, and the Air Force fought that change harder than any other service. It is for that reason today that the Army has a better space cadre development program than the Air Force. It is notable that this was in fact the reason the Army stood up the Army Air Corps in 1926—to provide air professionals a way to grow and become airman unrestricted by Army personnel orthodoxy. And that is perhaps why the Air Force has fought this for so many years—because they know that the inevitable destination for a space corps is a separate space force, which they do not desire. A space department fixes this issue as well.

⁷ The Navy had a space professional development cadre program pursuant to the Rumsfeld Commission recommendations but as referenced above, as new needs arose within the Navy, it was eliminated

Impediments: Cost versus Necessity; Integration versus Separation:

Multiple objections have been written to the standup of a new department—cost and new layers of bureaucracy being the most common. But these objections, taken to their logical conclusion, would suggest that we should have no separate services—that we would have been better off keeping the Air Force within the Army, or that we should merge the Marine Corps into a single service with the Navy. And of course, we would all naturally find such suggestions as both untenable and antithetical to why those individual organizations exist. The question is not if this will cost more, or if it creates more bureaucracy—it will, and it does. The question is one of necessity. If it requires a new department to maintain uncontestable U.S. leadership in space, then that cost is an investment, and that new bureaucracy is just plain good management. Because without space, the cost across DoD is so very much higher, and without that management, our progress all the slower.

Others have argued that we should not be separating space from the Air Force because we need space integrated with our warfighting forces. Unfortunately, that facile sentiment belies the truth of who actually brings space power to the battle, who integrates it into a war plan, and who uses it. The Air Force is fond of saying that they spend nearly 90% of all the money spent on space—but that's just not so. It is true that the Air Force spends nearly 90% of the unclassified money. But when classified resources are added in, their percentage falls to less than 50%.

Likewise, when examining who brings space power to the conventional battlefield, the plain truth is that of the three major space support services—ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance), SatCom (Satellite Communications), and PNT (Position Navigation and Timing)—the Air Force only brings the last of these. ISR and SatCom are provided for and

operated by, respectively, the NRO and the Army. And these two space services are more tightly woven into responsive war planning and execution than PNT. So the Air Force does not have a corner on that either.

Finally, it is the role of a Combatant Commander (COCOM), not a service, to integrate forces from all the domains into a coherent strategy. The job of the service is to deliver ready forces, trained in the domain, with a doctrine defined of how they fight. The COCOM integrates them into a war plan. For anyone who cares to closely examine the arguments, protestations about separating space from the Air Force harming integration are dubious at best and somewhat disingenuous.

Summary:

Recently, even the Air Force Association (AFA), which itself opposes the immediate creation of a space force, admits that “standing up a new armed service for space is not *if*, but *when*”⁸. It is abundantly clear to anyone who has examined this debate over the past decades, or who has studied the problems identified above, that we will eventually have a separate department for space. To that point, I think it is only appropriate to quote the words of General Hap Arnold who founded the AFA and is viewed as the Father of the modern Air Force. In his appearance before Congress in 1946 advocating immediate action to establish an Air Force he said:

Each new crisis, has found our armed services far from effectively, efficiently, or economically organized. With each crisis, modernization and coordination have been hammered out under war pressure at great waste of resources.

⁸ Air Force Association Position on the Proposed Establishment of a Space Force as an Additional Armed Service, September 17, 2018, <https://www.afa.org/publications-news/news/2018/09/18/the-air-force-association-position-on-the-proposed-establishment>

The two world wars that had only recently ended found the US inadequately organized for operation in defense of the air domain. Gen Arnold knew it. And he knew that future wars would depend critically on U.S. Air Power and we could not afford to repeat the failures of the past by entering them unprepared for the task at hand. Luckily, the constraints of distance and speed in 1917 and 1941 allowed the US to “hammer out” US air power organization in time to respond. But we know now, as Gen Arnold knew then, that future wars would brook no such quarter. Historical limits on distance and speed do not apply in a world of hypersonic weapons, instantaneous worldwide communication, and the ability to reach out by both kinetic and non-kinetic means in mere seconds or minutes. An unimaginable level of US military power, and therefore deterrence, derives from space. We cannot afford to enter into the next conflict “ineffectively or inefficiently” organized in that domain. The time to address that issue is now, while we are at peace, not later, when the adversary has already gained the upper hand.