

**Blue Origin Fact Sheet**  
GAO Pre-Award Protest  
U.S. Air Force Phase 2 Launch Service Procurement RFP

**Ensuring Competition and Innovation in National Security Space Launch**

Blue Origin is proud to partner with the United States Air Force to end the nation's reliance on the Russian-made RD-180 engine and provide an innovative, commercial heavy-lift launch capability to assure U.S. access to space.

**Why We Filed the Protest**

On August 12<sup>th</sup>, Blue Origin filed a protest with the GAO to ensure the terms of the Air Force Phase 2 Launch Service Procurement (LSP) Request for Proposal (RFP) clearly promote full and fair competition among national security space launch providers.

As drafted, the LSP RFP includes evaluation criteria that are ambiguous and fail to comply with federal procurement statutes and regulations. This subjectivity of the criteria makes it impossible to accurately respond to the RFP.

To ensure the process maximizes value for the American taxpayer and protects U.S. national security interests in space, it is essential that the Air Force structure the LSP RFP in a way that fosters a fair and level playing field for new entrants.

***The RFP is Flawed***

The protest seeks clarification on the same points Blue Origin has repeatedly raised in good faith with the Air Force over the past several months and highlights the RFP's shortcomings.

Specifically, the Phase 2 RFP:

- **Contains unclear and ambiguous selection criteria.** The complete listing has all the weighting factors; however, the selection will be based on two offerings (i.e., can mix and match). As it is not clear what competitors will bid, the entire field of proposers are at a disadvantage. Additionally, many of the government's technical requirements are too vague to accurately price.
- **Discriminates against new competitors.** Allows a backup launch vehicle solution, which favors the incumbent providers and could perpetuate U.S. reliance on the Russian-built RD-180 engine.
- **Unnecessarily restricts competition.** Awards exclusive five-year contracts to only two providers.

Overall, the RFP terms are onerous, unnecessary, and will not get best value by leveraging commercial best practices. Unfortunately, they reflect a failure by the Air Force to implement agile and cost-effective acquisition strategies.

***The Air Force is Constraining Competition***

The Air Force is pursuing a flawed acquisition strategy for the National Security Space Launch program. Unless the Air Force changes its approach, this procurement will perpetuate a market duopoly in national security space launch well into the next decade, causing higher launch prices, less assured access to space, and a missed opportunity to expand our national security interests and bolster U.S. leadership in space.

## **Blue Origin is Committed to the USAF's National Security Space Mission**

Blue Origin is committed to working with the Air Force and Congress to end the nation's reliance on the Russian-made RD-180. That is why Blue Origin used private funding to develop the BE-4 engine for its own heavy-lift launch system and is providing it to the Air Force's incumbent provider, United Launch Alliance, a direct competitor.

The protest will not affect the timing for the Air Force to transition national security launches off the RD-180 engine since all development activity is occurring under the Launch Service Agreements awarded in October 2018. There are no additional funds in the Phase 2 LSP that would accelerate that transition.

In fact, if the Air Force continued all Launch Services Agreements through launch vehicle certification, the Air Force could have as many as four launch providers that do not rely on Russian engines.

While the GAO considers the protest, Blue Origin is continuing its participation in the RFP process and on August 9, submitted its response to the Phase 2 RFP. Blue Origin submitted a compelling proposal that meets all the Air Force's requirements and missions and delivers tremendous value to the American taxpayer, despite the deficiencies of the RFP selection criteria.