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**Statement for the Record of Dr. Christopher J. Scolese  
Director, National Reconnaissance Office**

**House Permanent Select Committee for Intelligence  
Hearing on Commercially Available information**

**Thursday, Dec 18, 2025**

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## **Introduction**

Chairman Crawford, Ranking Member Himes, and members of the Committee, I'm honored to join you today along with my colleagues, Principal Deputy DNI Lukas and Lt. Gen. Breidenkamp, and to represent the outstanding professionals of the National Reconnaissance Office.

The NRO is charged with developing, acquiring, launching, and operating our nation's highly sophisticated constellation of intelligence satellites. We help protect the United States' national security interests by delivering space-based global situational awareness for national defense and policy decision-makers.

For 64 years, NRO has been at the leading edge of innovation in space-based ISR, developing capabilities that advance our national security.

Today, the NRO continues to build on that legacy – enhancing the size of our constellation, adopting advanced technologies, strengthening the resilience and capabilities of our ground architecture, and deepening partnerships with commercial enterprises. We are doing all this while keeping pace with growing requirements and maintaining integrity and trust, as demonstrated by NRO's recent achievement of its 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive clean financial audit.

Over the last five years alone, the use of space has dramatically evolved. The rapidly maturing commercial space sector has created a range of opportunities for the NRO to leverage, from advanced satellite buses, to increased commercial launch providers, to commercial data. The NRO has, for years, recognized that partnering with the commercial sector can add value to our mission, and we have accelerated our adoption and use of commercial capabilities that can help us meet mission requirements.

### **Commercially Available Information (CAI)**

As a data-centric enterprise, the NRO partners with the commercial sector to complement collection from national technical means, and we have accelerated our adoption and use of Commercially Available Information (CAI) to help us meet rapidly increasing Intelligence Community (IC) and Department of Defense (DoD) requirements.

We greatly appreciate Congress' support for NRO's responsible use of commercially available information. As we have acquired this information to meet our requirements, we remain focused on preventing duplication, reducing waste, and ensuring transparency in the acquisition of CAI.

At the same time we are building relationships with industry, we are also forging deeper collaborative relationships across the whole of government (e.g. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), National Security Agency (NSA)) to avoid duplication and waste, optimizing the use of public resources entrusted to us.

We also understand that commercial data is valuable because of the powerful insights it can provide. For that reason, we also take seriously our obligation to safeguard that information and ensure that we comply with all applicable laws and policies protecting privacy and civil liberties.

Current law, policy, and governing frameworks provide effective avenues to maximize the operational utility and affordability of commercial data, while also providing a structure for robust oversight and reporting of our operations, including the acquisition and use of commercial information.

### **CAI Reporting and Oversight**

Recognizing the growing sophistication and value of commercial capabilities and data, the NRO established the Commercial System Program Office in 2017 as a joint effort

with NGA. In 2022 we elevated the office to make it a direct report to me, in response to Congressional guidance, ensuring vigilant oversight – at the NRO’s leadership level – of the data we acquire and how we use it.

NRO’s Commercial System Program Office is able to initiate contractual relationships with the necessary speed and agility that give us an edge in acquiring the tools and data we need to be responsive to national policymakers and warfighters in the current environment.

We appreciate Congress’ oversight to ensure we are successfully executing our mission on behalf of the American people, and we are committed to fulfilling Congressional requirements to report all commercial procurement and budgetary information on a regular basis. We do this in a number of ways, including:

- Delivering the Annual Congressional Budget Justification Book and Congressional Justification Book submissions, which include separate accounting for commercial procurement;
- Providing quarterly Major System Acquisition Program Execution Reports, with separate accounting for commercial procurement;
- Providing quarterly Commercial System Program Office briefings, as directed in the FY21 Intelligence Authorization Act;
- Delivering timely notifications of contract awards; and
- By participating in numerous briefings and meetings to keep our Congressional oversight committees apprised of our activities. NRO has held more than 20 engagements with Congress in 2025 alone on the use of commercial data.

### **Community Coordination**

We also remain actively engaged with the National System for Geospatial Intelligence Commercial GEOINT Requirements Process under the direction of the Director of NGA as the GEOINT Functional Manager.

This process enables IC, DoW, and other federal organizations to prioritize, consolidate, and share commercial capability needs while coordinating commercial GEOINT purchases.

**Closing**

I'll close by reaffirming that extending the NRO's decades-long record of success in securing and expanding the U.S. space-based ISR advantage will depend upon three things: 1) relentless innovation; 2) the execution of smart, strategic investments in commercial partnerships; and 3) Congress' sustained support for our mission.

We will continue to collaborate across the whole of government to support the goals of preventing duplication, reducing waste, and ensuring transparency of our acquisitions and operations.

We will continue to reinforce a culture of compliance in our lawful and responsible acquisition and use of open-source information, to include commercially available information, in accordance with NRO, Director of National Intelligence (DNI), and DOW policies, to ensure that in using this data we protect the rights and civil liberties of all Americans. And we will keep Congress fully informed of our efforts.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering your questions.