

OPENING STATEMENT
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of the Subcommittee on Space

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space

Space Situational Awareness: Whole of Government Perspectives on Roles and Responsibilities
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Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Chairmen, for holding this joint hearing on "*Space Situational Awareness: Whole of Government Perspectives on Roles and Responsibilities.*" I'd like to welcome our distinguished witnesses and thank you for being here.

I'm pleased that we are working together across our committees on a topic that is so important to the United States and our growing commercial space sector. As we become more reliant on space for our economic and national security in addition to continued leadership in science and exploration, the need to ensure the safety and sustainability of the space environment becomes paramount. Understanding and estimating the locations and movement of space objects to avoid potential collisions – also known as space situational awareness -- is critical to our ability to ensure the safety of our civil, commercial, and national security operations in space. This need to understand and track the locations and movement of space objects is becoming increasingly challenging with the prospect of new space operations such as satellite servicing and mega-constellations, which will add hundreds, if not thousands, of satellites to low Earth orbit.

The Department of Defense (DOD) has been carrying out the role of providing space situational awareness data and information services to space satellite operators and communicating with operators on potential collisions. They should be commended for their job in this capacity. However, the growing number of operators and demand for space situational data and services has led many stakeholders to consider whether a civil agency is better suited to carry out this service, allowing the DOD to focus on its military mission. Further, commercial and non-U.S. entities are also developing capabilities in space situational awareness data collection, processing, and analysis. Partnerships with those entities could enhance U.S. space situational data services.

This week, the President signed Space Policy Directive-3 (SPD-3) on National Space Traffic Management Policy, which would assign the role of managing communications on space situational awareness to the Commerce Department. However, some propose placing that responsibility with FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation, given its existing capabilities and resources. So while I welcome the Administration's interest in addressing this important issue, it is now Congress's job to debate the proper roles and responsibilities for the various agencies involved and determine national policy on space situational awareness. It is critical that we get this right, because other nations are looking to us for leadership on space situational awareness and how we might encourage safe and responsible behaviors in space.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses. Thank you, and I yield back.