



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

For Immediate Release
June 22, 2018

Media Contact: Bridget Dunn
(202) 225-6371

Statement by Chairman Brian Babin (R-Texas)

Space Situational Awareness: Whole of Government Perspectives on Roles and Responsibilities

Chairman Babin: Thank you Chairman Rogers. I appreciate the opportunity to collaborate on today's joint hearing and look forward to working together on this and other issues.

Space situational awareness, and the related question of space traffic management, is an important and timely topic. One of the reasons is that American industry is investing in and operating more satellites and spacecraft in space than any other time in history. Indeed, America's future in space looks prosperous because our industry is leading a new era of private space activities. As more and more actors proliferate the Earth's orbital regimes, knowing where and when spacecraft will be moving and being able to coordinate in order to avoid collisions, is critical to ensuring a sustainable operational environment for all.

On Monday, I was at the National Space Council meeting as President Trump signed Space Policy Directive 3 (SPD-3), a National Space Traffic Management Policy. SPD-3 is the first ever national policy to address space situational awareness (SSA) and space traffic management. Through this policy, America is leading the world in addressing this long-standing and rapidly growing issue. I applaud President Trump for his leadership on this important topic.

Last year, I co-sponsored, along with Chairman Lamar Smith and then Representative Jim Bridenstine, the American Space Commerce Free Enterprise Act. This act directs the Department of Commerce to be responsible for authorizing and supervising in-space activities, in a minimally burdensome way. Part of this act includes provisions on space debris mitigation and space traffic management consultations. In fact, the Free Enterprise Act laid the policy foundations for both National Space Policy Directive 2 and 3.

Space Policy Directive 3 takes the policy principles of the Free Enterprise Act, including establishing the Department of Commerce as the lead agency, and builds upon them. I strongly support the Department of Commerce as the lead agency and I am glad the president agrees.

As we look at the president's policy and reflect upon the need for legislation, there are several important related policies that Congress should support.

First, there is a need for federal science and technology investments to be coordinated and leveraged to support space situational awareness and space traffic management.

Second, the Department of Commerce's space situational awareness program should be designed to be flexible.

Third, as the Department of Commerce takes over public SSA services, we need to ensure there is a continuation of basic SSA services that DoD currently provides with no break in service or erosion in quality.

Fourth, the Commerce Department should establish a SSA data test bed to allow for private and public-sector access to the underlying SSA data used to provide services.

Lastly, the Department of Commerce must receive an appropriate level of funding from Congress to carry out its new mission.

There has been a great need for leadership in these matters. I am proud that the United States has taken this opportunity to lead the world in the development of a civil space situational awareness and space traffic management framework.

I understand that Secretary Ross went to great lengths to be available to testify this morning – I thank him and all of our witnesses for appearing and look forward to their testimony.

###