



COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE SPACE & TECHNOLOGY REPUBLICANS

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing - Space Situational Awareness: Guiding the Transition to a Civil Capability

As Submitted for the Record

May 12, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Beyer. Today's hearing on space situational awareness is an important one. Russia's anti-satellite launch this fall brought the issue of space debris once again into mainstream discussion.

Fortunately, there were no collisions with the International Space Station as some worried would happen, but it did highlight the need for effective monitoring and coordination of space objects and debris.

In the two years since we last held a hearing on this topic, the commercial space situational awareness industry has continued to expand. The market is predicted to grow to a \$1.8 billion industry by 2026.

That growth is due to the innovation and effectiveness of our commercial satellite operators and space data providers.

If we are to achieve our goal of effectively coordinating space objects, accurately tracking space debris, and advancing space safety, then we need to be sure we don't constrain the commercial industry with poorly considered regulations.

The Department of Defense has been providing the lion's share of space situational awareness information, but the private sector has emerged as a valuable partner with innovative solutions and services.

With the responsibility for sharing this data being transferred to the Department of Commerce following Space Policy Directive 3, it's more important than ever to encourage private sector growth. This industry can fill critical gaps in existing data, providing services, sensor data, and situational awareness.

There is an ever-growing need for these services as more and more industries discover its value.

So it's important that we don't take a heavy-handed regulatory approach that will stifle this growing industry. If the Department of Commerce adopts a clearinghouse approach, then the government can partner with the private sector and international community to share data and establish consensus-based best practices and standards.

This will improve data availability and utility and allow for better information and better services. I'm hopeful that the Department of Commerce will take a pragmatic approach that prioritizes growth and innovation rather than stifling commercial development.

The best way to ensure this is by taking the Office of Space Commerce out of NOAA and returning it to where it is authorized – at the Department of Commerce. That will allow them to provide better coordination and make full use of the Department's resources.

I'm encouraged by the continued growth of the commercial space industry and I'm hopeful that we can continue to encourage that while improving our space situational awareness. I look forward to hearing more from our witnesses today, and I yield back the balance of my time.