



Opening Statement of Chairman Brian Babin

Environment Subcommittee Hearing

From Orbit to Operations: How Weather Satellites Support the National Security Mission

January 13, 2026

Good morning. Thank you to our Subcommittee Chairman, Mr. Franklin, for presiding over this timely hearing.

As the gentleman from Florida noted, one of America's greatest military triumphs was due in large part to accurately predicting the weather. That success stemmed from meticulous data collection in the right places, allowing U.S. forces to stay several steps ahead of the adversary.

Decades later, as Presidents Kennedy and Eisenhower reflected on the Normandy invasion, President Kennedy asked how the operation had been so successful. President Eisenhower's reply was simple: "Because we had better meteorologists than the Germans."

That lesson still holds today. NOAA's satellite architecture and forecasting capabilities remain crucial to advancing our national security.

One of this Committee's top priorities in recent years has been enhancing the accuracy of weather forecasting in the United States. NOAA's short- and long-term forecasts rely on data from multiple sources, including a fleet of satellites operating in both polar and geostationary orbits.

These systems provide essential observations of the Earth's atmosphere and oceans, supporting forecast development and improving preparedness for extreme weather events.

This Committee held multiple hearings on the status of various satellite programs, and since our last review, progress has continued toward advancing NOAA's broader mission.

As a roughly \$6 billion agency, NOAA must strategically stretch every dollar appropriated by Congress. I look forward to discussing with our witnesses how financial arrangements between

NOAA and the Department of Defense are structured, particularly regarding the transfer of satellites that have exceeded their planned operational lifetimes.

NOAA often shoulders significant responsibility for supporting Department of Defense requirements. We know, for example, that NOAA transferred legacy GOES satellites to the Department of Defense at no cost.

NOAA also provides operational and facility support through the Satellite Operations Facility in Suitland, Maryland. While the Department of Defense compensates NOAA for operational support, the satellites themselves are transferred without reimbursement. The transfer may also reduce NOAA's operational redundancy, as the retired satellite is moved to other operational areas and no longer serves as a backup over the US. I think we can all agree that putting a retired satellite to use to support the warfighter is a good thing, but it is worth noting that DoD has a much larger budget than NOAA.

This hearing will highlight where progress is being made and identify additional steps to strengthen our most critical mission: protecting lives and property. The long-standing cooperation between NOAA and DoD on weather satellites benefits both organizations. It is important for policymakers to ensure that both agencies are equally contributing to the shared cause of improved forecasting. In a time of tight fiscal constraints, finding efficiencies is imperative.

Discussions like these help inform future legislation that puts American interests in space first. As adversaries such as China and Russia continue to press forward, we must ensure that—just as we did before Normandy—we remain steps ahead.

I look forward to hearing from our expert witnesses and yield back the remainder of my time.