



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

**DNI John Ratcliffe's Remarks at the
Eighth Meeting of the National Space Council**

Delivered on December 9, 2020

Thanks to VPOTUS

Mr. Vice President and Members of the Council, thank you for allowing me to update you on the threats we face in space, and how the Intelligence Community is taking unprecedented action in order to increase the effectiveness of our national security space enterprise and respond to the President's new National Space Policy.

The importance of space

By almost any measure, the dramatic increase in space-related capabilities and services over the past decade have been game changers with profound implications for life on earth. Over 80 nations operate in space, and 50 countries have dedicated government budgets for space.

Governments are not the only players in space; dozens of new commercial space companies have emerged, with plans to launch tens of thousands of new satellites in the coming years...more than all the satellites launched since the dawn of the space age. Over the past five

years, U.S. companies have launched more commercial remote sensing satellites into orbit than the rest of the world. Today, that trend is reversing. The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency predicts that in this decade the rest of the world will launch at least twice as many commercial remote sensing satellites as the U.S.

Economically, the global space industry has grown rapidly in recent years and is approaching \$500 billion in annual revenue. But more critical is that broad sectors of the U.S. economy have come to rely on space-related capabilities. Estimates suggest that industries with reliance on space-based services contribute over \$5 trillion to our Gross Domestic Product. Simply put: we depend on space systems as critical infrastructure directly supporting the American way of life. If these space-based services are disrupted, we could see adverse effects on nearly all sectors of the U.S. economy, including consumer supply chains, transportation, telecommunications, agriculture, and finance.

Mr. Vice President and Members of the Council, to a degree unparalleled in American history, the nation's economy and security rely on space systems that our competitors challenge and our adversaries increasingly threaten.

Threats continue to grow

America's vital interests are increasingly at risk as China and Russia develop and field destructive weapons to threaten U.S. and allied space capabilities. As I wrote in an op-ed published in the Wall Street Journal last week, the intelligence is clear: China poses the greatest national security threat to the United States.

Some examples:

- China is pursuing weapons capable of destroying our satellites up to geosynchronous Earth orbit, where many critical space systems reside;
- China has also deployed a ground-based missile intended to target and destroy satellites in low Earth orbit.

- Russia has a similar system in development that is likely to be operational in the next several years.
- Russia has also fielded a ground-based laser weapon, which could blind or damage our space-based optical sensors.

Russia in particular has recently demonstrated provocative behavior creating a potentially dangerous situation in space. Over the past year, the Russian government launched a satellite that began actively maneuvering close to a U.S. government satellite. I want to make clear to members of the Council, that we consider this threatening behavior, especially considering that the Russians previously launched a very similar satellite that exhibited characteristics of a weapon when it released a high-speed projectile. Space Force Chief General Raymond said it himself, “this is not the behavior of a responsible space-faring nation.” In short, the threat to U.S. and allied space systems continues to grow unabated.

Space is now a “priority intelligence domain”

The President's new National Space Policy recognizes that space is a "priority intelligence domain," and the Intelligence Community has already begun to move out. Earlier this year, we directed our intelligence agencies to increase support to space defense and added new funding to counter space threats. Although the numbers are classified, this represents a significant new investment, which will directly address the emerging intelligence requirements of the Space Force.

Additionally, we are working directly with the Space Force leadership team to create a new "National Space Intelligence Center," which will deliver the intelligence support necessary to achieve our national security objectives. The establishment of this new center will provide the nation unparalleled scientific and technical intelligence on space-related threats, and it will serve as the service intelligence center for the Space Force.

The commercial space sector is a key element of national power.

As I described earlier, America's entrepreneurs and innovators are demonstrating amazing new capabilities in the commercial space marketplace. The new National Space Policy recognizes that the rapidly expanding commercial space industry is a vital element of national power. Consistent with this recognition, I recently approved the creation of the Intelligence Community Commercial Space Council. This high-level forum will facilitate collaboration across the Intelligence Community and with industry, focusing on the intersection of commercial space services and national security. The Council will deepen our understanding of the capabilities and trends of the U.S. and foreign commercial space industry, provide recommendations to bolster our use of commercial space capabilities, and support the growth of a robust U.S. commercial space industry that is responsive to national security needs. As an example of our increasing engagement with the commercial space sector, the National Reconnaissance Office, or NRO, recently conducted a national security mission on a small,

commercial rocket launched from outside the United States – a first for the Intelligence Community.

The IC is a co-equal partner in the national security space enterprise

The new national space policy recognizes that the Intelligence Community and the Department of Defense are co-equal partners in the national security space enterprise, both operating a variety of spacecraft that perform vital missions for the nation. However, countering the increasing threats we face now and in the future will require a higher level of collaboration and integration than in the past.

Previously, we reported to the Council that the Intelligence Community and Department of Defense have agreed to align U.S. Space Command and the NRO under a new “protect and defend strategy” for the purposes of jointly guarding our vital space systems, should conflict extend to space. For the first time, there will be a unified structure that fully integrates Intelligence and Defense plans, authorities, and capabilities to ensure seamless execution of space defense actions.

I am pleased to report that NRO and Space Command are testing the emerging construct in a series of wargames and experiments designed to fully “pressure test” the new arrangement before Space Command reaches its full operational capability.

Finally, I am pleased to report that my team at the ODNI is working with the Space Force leadership to evaluate the potential for the Space Force to become the 18th member of the U.S. Intelligence Community. We anticipate a decision on this history-making opportunity in the next few months, which would profoundly strengthen the partnership between the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community.

Conclusion

As adversaries increasingly threaten our nation’s vital interests in space, the actions I have described here today, plus many more that I cannot discuss publically, will continue to provide us a competitive advantage, counter emergent threats, and achieve unified action should conflict extend to space. I want to assure you and the American public... that if

adversaries challenge us in space, they will face a truly united national security space team.

Thank you again Mr. Vice President and members of the Council, for allowing me to update you on these important efforts.