

US continues to militarize space

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The US military is expecting to launch two satellites later this year and two more tentatively in 2016 to erect the groundwork for space hegemony over technologically advanced countries such as China and Russia. The declassified information, called the Geosynchronous Space Situational Awareness Program (GSSAP), will augment optical telescopes and ground-based radars to spy on other countries' spacecraft and, as an ostensibly secondary job, track space debris.

In its effort to encircle China and control the former states of the Soviet Union, the American military has been increasingly worried about maintaining supremacy over any adversaries who are developing anti-satellite weapons. In 2007, China launched a weather satellite in low-earth orbit using a ballistic missile, and last year propelled a missile into near-geosynchronous altitude. A geosynchronous orbit (GSO) is at an altitude where the orbit time matches the earth's rotation time. A special case of GSO is a geosynchronous Earth orbit (GEO), also known as a geostationary earth orbit, in which the satellite stays above the same point on the earth's surface. American military officials branded the Chinese satellite as a test of an anti-satellite system because of the inherent strategic value of a GSO.

US Air Force General William Shelton said that "[o]ne cheap shot" obliterating advanced American military satellites "would be devastating" to the American military and other invested allied nations. He added that the US is "committed to investing in space surveillance assets like GSSAP that will directly enable safe operations, protect our spacecraft and indirectly enable a range of decisive responses that will render counter-space threats ineffective."

Brian Weeden, an advisor to the Secure World Foundation, a Washington-based organization purportedly devoted to developing peace and security in outer space amongst nations, said that "The US has a

lot of very specialized and important national security satellites in the GEO region and it is very concerned about protecting those satellites ... so by telling other countries that it has some ability to closely monitor objects near GEO and their behavior, the U.S. hopes that will deter other countries from attacking its important satellites."

These satellites in the GEO, according to the Air Force General, are "able to look down and surveil vast pieces of the Earth and also provide communications support." Undoubtedly, these are used to spy on other nations and individuals and are probably collecting data to share with the NSA. The President of the United States utilizes this to communicate to military units in order to launch attacks or reconnoiter particular areas, and for general information.

The new satellites are built by Orbital Sciences Corp and are expected to drift around the orbital GEO corridor, which is located 23,000 miles above the Earth—sheltering most of the world's communications satellites and other spacecraft. The GSSAP system will have an electro-optical sensor, will be maneuverable while in orbit, and will not be hampered or disrupted by severe weather as ground-based instruments are.

To sense the scope and the preponderant tracking capabilities of the US in space, the Air Force currently monitors 23,000 pieces of orbiting debris larger than 4 inches. Some of these are old rocket parts to the remnants of an exploded Chinese satellite. One can only imagine how many "enemy" spacecraft and satellites are tracked by the Air Force.

Along with the GSSAP system, Shelton commented on additional space surveillance systems. A Space Fence will be built on Kwajalein Island, part of the Marshall Islands a neo-colonial outpost for the American military in the Pacific. According to the US Air Force, "the system will operate with greater accuracy and timeliness to meet warfighter

requirements for Space Situational Awareness.” It creates a boundary in space in which any object passing through the field can be easily detected. The mission of it is “to maintain a constant surveillance of space and provide satellite data as directed by US Strategic Command to fulfill national requirements.” Swift and precise air strikes on military targets or individuals are facilitated by these new systems.

The US and Australia are also coordinating to assert space control over the Pacific. A space launch supporting radar, previously stationed in the Caribbean island of Antigua, will be relocated to Australia in order to give the military coverage against China. Moreover, US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and the Australian Minister of Defense David Johnston have agreed to move a space surveillance telescope from New Mexico to Australia.



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