Trump administration announces it has placed weapons in orbit, in major step in the militarization of space

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The Trump administration has placed weapons in orbit around the earth, Air Force Secretary Troy Meink announced Monday. The United States "now has on-orbit space control weapons capable of defending the joint force against hostile adversary action," Meink told the Air & Space Forces Association conference.

The announcement is a major step in the militarization of space and the escalation of war plans targeting nuclear-armed Russia and China. Meink spoke more than six months into the US-Israeli war on Iran, a day after Russian forces struck a passenger train near the Polish border and 10 days before Chinese President Xi Jinping is due at the White House.

The *Wall Street Journal*, praising the move in a Tuesday editorial, noted that it takes place ahead of Xi's arrival: "The timing of the space announcement may be no accident coming ahead of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Washington next week."

Meink refused to say what the weapons are, how many there are or when they were launched. The Space Force said in a statement to ABC News published Tuesday that the weapons "can be employed for offensive and defensive purposes at the direction of combatant commands."

Victoria Samson, chief director of space security and stability at the Secure World Foundation, a research group, told Defense One on Monday: "I don't think any US government official has ever said that before. The US also now has to accept the Chinese and Russians doing/saying the same." She told Al Jazeera Tuesday, "What this does is normalise weaponising space."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said Tuesday, "We urge the US side to stop expanding its military capabilities and preparing for war in outer space," and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the same day that "space must be free of any weapon."

In January 2025, US President Donald Trump ordered the Pentagon to build "proliferated space-based interceptors," a program named Golden Dome that he priced at $175 billion that May. The Congressional Budget Office estimated this May that such a system would cost $1.2 trillion over 20 years, most of it for about 7,800 space-based interceptors.

The administration is asking $71.3 billion for the Space Force next fiscal year, nearly double the $40.1 billion requested a year earlier, inside the $1.5 trillion military budget it requested in April, a 44 percent increase over this year's and the largest since World War II.

The 1967 Outer Space Treaty, to which 118 states, including the United States, are party, commits its signatories "not to place in orbit around the earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction."

It reserves the moon and other celestial bodies "exclusively for peaceful purposes" but says nothing about conventional weapons in orbit, and the Space Force said Monday that its operations comply with it.

The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty between Washington and Moscow barred each side from developing, testing or deploying missile-defense systems that are "sea-based, air-based, space-based, or mobile land-based." US President George W. Bush withdrew from it in 2002, and Golden Dome's space-based interceptors are the type of weapons it barred.

The Trump administration has abandoned or bypassed a series of arms-control agreements. In 2018,

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Trump pulled out of the nuclear agreement with Iran, and in 2019, out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which had banned a class of US and Russian missiles. In 2020, he left the Open Skies Treaty, which had allowed unarmed surveillance flights.

New START, the last treaty limiting US and Russian strategic nuclear weapons, expired February 5; Trump had given no formal answer to Russian President Vladimir Putin's offer to observe its limits for another year.

On October 30, 2025, Trump ordered the Pentagon "to start testing our Nuclear Weapons on an equal basis," and the next day the United States cast, for the first time, the lone vote against the annual resolution of the UN disarmament committee backing the moratorium on nuclear testing. The United States has not set off a nuclear explosive test since 1992.

On November 4, Alison Storsve, the US delegate, told the committee that the United States "must vote NO on the resolution" titled "Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space."

"I don't want to tell Beijing and Moscow what I've done," Lieutenant General Gregory Gagnon, head of Space Force Combat Forces Command, said of measures to protect US satellites in February. "We also need, as part of our joint force, the ability to attack." In December 2025, the administration announced a record $11 billion arms package for Taiwan.

Meink's announcement takes place amid the uncontrolled escalation of the war in Ukraine. The *Kyiv Post* reported Monday, citing an internal German government planning document seen by *Politico*, that Germany's Defense Ministry plans to spend nearly €3.4 billion on US Tomahawk cruise missiles, with a range of more than 1,500 kilometers, and on Typhon launchers to fire them. The purchase would give Germany its first ground-based long-range strike force, and a ministry spokesperson confirmed that "the procurement of the US Typhon system with Tomahawk cruise missiles remains intended."

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius announced in Kyiv on May 11 that Germany and Ukraine would jointly build unmanned weapons "at all distances, especially in the deep strike zone."

On Sunday, the day before Meink spoke, Russian forces struck a stationary Kyiv-Warsaw passenger train with a drone at Yahodyn station, two kilometers from the Polish border. Ukraine had evacuated the 206 passengers about 15 minutes earlier, and nobody was injured. A train carrying former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was already inside Poland, and a third, with former CIA Director David Petraeus aboard, stood at the station and was not struck. All had attended a conference in Kyiv.

The European powers answered the strike with calls for more weapons. Pistorius called the strike Monday "a calculated escalation by Russia intended to frighten Europe," and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said of Putin, "He thinks that he can stop us from supporting Ukraine and that he can undermine our unity. He is wrong."

Kaja Kallas, the European Union's foreign policy chief, said Monday the strike was "a message to the Western world" and that "we should do exactly the opposite: we must show that we are there for Ukraine and we are not scared off." On Tuesday, Poland and Romania scrambled fighter jets as Russian forces struck Ukraine with drones near their borders, and NATO fighters shot down a drone over Lithuania, Lithuanian President Gitanas Naus?da said.

Other imperialist powers are arming for space. French President Emmanuel Macron, opening the French military's space command center in Toulouse in November 2025, said, "Space is no longer a sanctuary; it has become a battlefield." Pistorius announced in September 2025 that Germany would spend €35 billion on military space over five years to "defend and deter in space."

The space weapons the *Journal* credits with opening the door to the assault on Iran are now aimed at Russia and China.

Neither party in Washington opposes the program. The military spending bill that pays for the Space Force, $839 billion this year, passed the House in January with 149 Democratic votes. By Tuesday night no member of Congress had been quoted objecting to weapons in orbit.

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