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Statement for the Record of Mr. William Adkins
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House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces
Hearing on “Fiscal Year 2027 National Security Space Programs”

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Chairman DesJarlais, Ranking Member Moulton, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today alongside my colleagues.

I'm proud to be here today to represent the nearly 3,000 men and women of the National Reconnaissance Office. As an agency belonging to the Department of War as well as an element of the Intelligence Community, the NRO is uniquely positioned to meet the needs of the national security community. Data collected by NRO's overhead capabilities (primarily signals intelligence, imagery, and radar) underpins much of the Intelligence Community's reporting to national policymakers, intelligence analysts, and warfighters.

From the high-ground of space, NRO systems provide timely, accurate, and actionable data for global situational awareness and support to military operations. Space-based collection is often the only means of gathering intelligence against adversaries who are trying to hide their capabilities or obfuscate their plans, especially in denied territory.

However, the NRO does not do this alone. We work closely with our mission partners across the intelligence and defense communities, including the NGA and the U.S. Space Force represented alongside me today, as well as NSA and others.

Today, the NRO is in the third year of a transformational pivot to accelerate the fielding of proliferated architectures for some of our key mission areas. Specifically, we have significantly increased our launch tempo over the past three years with more than 200 satellites now on orbit to create the largest and most capable government constellation in our nation's history. Equally important, we're making significant investments in our ground architecture to squeeze the most out of the data we collect, and working with our mission partners to optimize the tasking of our considerable, but still finite collection systems. The result is that NRO systems will be more resilient and provide greater coverage to our partners and users.

However, as this committee understands, our adversaries are investing heavily in counter-space capabilities to deny our nation's strategic advantage in space. In response, we have made substantial progress fielding proliferated architectures across diverse orbits, integrating commercial systems and capabilities, and operating our exquisite collection systems to meet the nation's needs.

The NRO's continued success depends on our ability to innovate, invest in our workforce, and further strengthen our partnerships. We are continuing to build partnerships across government, academia, industry, and with allied nations, enabling us to leverage innovative technologies and maximize our impact.

The NRO continues to greatly benefit from commercial space sector advances in products, processes, and services. By expanding our commercial partnerships, we're using commercial satellite platforms, launch capabilities, and a range of data sources—including electro-optical, radar, RF, and other phenomenologies. We combine these commercial feeds with national data streams and deliver the integrated results in a more accessible way to our customers.

To maintain our technological advantage and ensure America remains the world's leader in space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, we must continue to invest in leading-edge research—in areas such as photonics, quantum sensing, advanced materials, and artificial intelligence. Advances in these and other technologies will allow us to provide better information faster to users—especially warfighters downrange, allowing them to make critical decisions with the best information.

The key to the NRO's ability to accomplish its mission is its workforce, which is a blend of government civilians and members of every military service. The NRO is a relatively small organization, but has an extraordinarily talented and dedicated team of professionals with deep technical competence in systems engineering, acquisitions, operations, and program management who are devoted to delivering on the mission every day—on orbit, on the ground, and everywhere in between.

We take acquisition discipline and financial stewardship seriously to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. One of our program offices was recently awarded the David Packard Excellence in Acquisition Award by the Department of War and I'm also pleased to report that the NRO earned its 17th consecutive clean financial statement audit for fiscal year 2025.

In closing, with Congress' continued support, the NRO is well-positioned to provide the systems and capabilities the nation needs. On behalf of everyone at the NRO, thank you for this opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

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