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SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: FY27 Space Budget Hearing
STATEMENT OF: Mr. Thomas W. Ainsworth,
PTDO Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration

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OVERVIEW

Chairman DesJarlais, Ranking Member Moulton, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify before you today.

I am honored to be Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration (ASAF (SA&I)) and serving as the Service Acquisition Executive for Space (Space SAE). President Trump and Secretary Hegseth's direction to reform defense acquisition processes from the top down drives the actions of the entire space acquisition portfolio. Executing this vision of acquisition reform has been years in the making across the space enterprise, and my predecessors have made immense progress implementing the fundamental tools needed to deliver capabilities and meet threats driven by the global landscape.

The transformation of space acquisition has refocused processes to deliver integrated, resilient warfighter capability at speed. This culture shift remains an ongoing directive to restructure space acquisition to improve collaboration across requirements, acquisition, and operations, and to rapidly deliver results. The support of Congress, including provisions in the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), has removed barriers and put space acquisition at the forefront of acquisition reform and set up our enterprise to help lead these efforts across the Department.

In 2024, the space acquisition community went through a strategic reset and focused on implementing program management fundamentals and program execution. Guardians were asked to fix the bottlenecks that slowed down the acquisition process, deliver space capabilities that outpace evolving threats, and emphasize the importance of program management skills to accelerate acquisitions. In 2025, the momentum continued with a concerted effort to accelerate the culture of reform by prioritizing commercial technologies across all contracting actions and leveraging Executive Orders to capitalize on the economic resurgence occurring in the space industrial base.

In 2026, we are focusing on the "Year of Execution" by building on the tangible results of the previous two years and delivering integrated capabilities with deliberate speed and discipline. The Year of Execution focuses on performance, accountability, and the continuous delivery of game-changing capabilities.

As we move forward with the implementation of acquisition transformation, we will continue to prioritize building and maintaining an enduring relationship with stakeholders in Congress and working across the United States Space Force (USSF) and the Department to simplify requirements and execute the funding required for the space acquisition portfolio. We are provided with an extraordinary opportunity for the space acquisition community to drive additional capability into the enterprise and I look forward to working with Congress to accomplish those efforts.

FROM CULTURE TO CAPABILITY: SPACE ACQUISITION TRANSFORMATION

Embracing Agility and Speed in Acquisition

In accordance with Executive Order 14265, *Modernizing Defense Acquisitions and Spurring Innovation in the Defense Industrial Base*, Secretary Hegseth's November 2025 directives on Acquisition Transformation, and the acquisition reforms Congress passed as part of the FY26 NDAA, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) and the USSF fully embrace a renewed acquisition mindset that fundamentally changes our acquisition methods.

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This transformation prioritizes speed and adaptability by fielding minimum viable products and improving them through rapid, iterative development. We are conscious that speed requires discipline and mutual accountability. We have deliberatively reviewed the entire acquisition portfolio by conducting a review of 33 Acquisition Category I and equivalent programs and issued more than 12 Acquisition Decision Memorandums to codify, correct, and embed new guiding principles to hold both our program managers and industry partners responsible for delivering integrated systems on operationally relevant timelines. The most important and visible changes driving this transformation are the expansion of Program Executive Officer (PEO) roles with the establishment of Portfolio Acquisition Executives (PAEs).

Portfolio Acquisition Executives. With the transition from PEOs to PAEs, portfolios are being deliberately organized to align operational missions and minimize interfaces and dependencies, and capitalize on technology expertise to reduce seams, as well as improve integration. PAEs will have the authority to make informed requirements and budget trade-offs to deliver cohesive and effective capabilities for the Joint Force. Acquisition professionals and operators will work together throughout the entire lifecycle of a program, from initial design to final operation to drive innovation, optimize costs and schedules, and establish new, more effective approaches for test and operational acceptance.

In less than 60 days, the Acting ASAF (SA&I) delivered on Secretary Hegseth's direction by submitting the initial PAE nominations to the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Acquisition & Sustainment in December 2025. The PAE Implementation Plan was completed and delivered in January 2026. The plan's first tranche of designated mission areas includes Space Access and Space Based Sensing & Targeting. Additional tranches will be announced this year. The full standup of these PAEs is pending approval of each of the individual PAE Transition Support Plans.

Empowering and Developing the Acquisition Workforce

Acquisition Transformation depends on a strong, technically proficient, and professional acquisition workforce. Although small in number, the USSF recognizes the importance of developing these warfighters to grow and invest in their personal and professional talents to develop the most talented acquisition professionals in the world.

I thank Congress and this Committee's support for continuously monitoring and optimizing our workforce development initiatives to strengthen our acquisition workforce.

We are implementing specialized space acquisition training programs, providing mentorship opportunities, and empowering PAEs with greater authority and flexibility to make resource decisions within their portfolios. We are extending the tenure of acquisition program manager and functional support assignments, including finance, legal, and contracting officers, to foster in-depth knowledge, continuity, accountability, and increased focus on major deliveries and key milestones.

Increasing Functional Depth. We are building the future today by creating multiple career field tracks and pathways in acquisition and engineering to ensure depth and leadership expertise to achieve senior rank and influence enterprise level outcomes based on their technical expertise. We know that in a fierce, multi-front competition for STEM talent against defense primes, tech giants, and start-ups, our most potent advantage is our mission. The Department offers an opportunity to contribute directly to national security in a way no other entity can, which serves as a powerful incentive for the best and brightest.

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Building An Enterprise-Wide Perspective. The USSF is developing a multidisciplinary officer corps with a foundational baseline of the operational missions and acquisition fundamentals to enhance integration between these communities. We know prioritizing a tighter integration between acquisition and operations expertise creates opportunities and synergies to rapidly deliver capabilities and outpace adversaries. Acquisition personnel with a thorough understanding of cyber, intelligence, and operational missions will break through traditional barriers to deliver at speed.

The DAF is breaking down cultural stovepipes through deliberate cross-functional assignments and mentorship, ensuring future leaders possess a holistic understanding of the mission, from concept to combat. Acquisition fundamentals are now taught alongside our core cyber, space, and intelligence disciplines to all new Guardians. This ensures every member of the USSF, regardless of specialty, understands the fundamentals of every USSF mission.

Acquisition Readiness. The newly established Acquisition Initial Qualification Training is purpose-built for the modern era. The 10-week initial qualification training course blends foundational knowledge with high-fidelity exercises and direct industry immersion, producing Guardians who are not just trained, but uniquely qualified to navigate the complexities of today's acquisition environment.

Active Management. The USSF acquisition workforce is proactively developing the junior workforce to be critical thinking future Senior Leaders. By forecasting the number of Senior Leader positions needed to lead our expanding acquisition mission, the DAF is strategically cultivating leaders at all ranks and grades. This ensures a robust pipeline of qualified officers ready for promotion and capable of effectively leading the force.

Leveraging Commercial and Industry For Warfighting Capabilities

As warfighters, the clear objective is to deliver proven warfighting capabilities on cost and schedule at a pace that enhances space superiority. Over the past couple of years, the space acquisition culture has shifted by embracing speed through partnerships with commercial and non-traditional players to achieve successful acquisitions. As a Department, we must take full advantage of the speed, innovation, and capabilities offered by the commercial space sector to create strategic advantages and support Combatant Commander objectives. To align with Executive Order 14335, *Enabling Competition in the Commercial Space Industry*, commercial must be the option of first resort, with government-specific systems acquired only if necessary.

Commercial Space Office. Space acquisition officials have been empowered to make decisions with a warfighting mindset and program managers are encouraged to engage directly with technology and companies. This critical interfacing is important with the ever-increasing space commercial industrial base. The announcement in fall 2025 to rename Space Systems Command's (SSC) Front Door initiative to the Space Force Front Door, run by SSC's Commercial Space Office (COMSO), highlights the importance of connecting industry and their emerging technologies to Guardians across all spectrums of the Service.

In October 2025, the USSF stood up its first-ever working capital fund (WCF) that allows pooled resources from disparate government customers to increase efficiency of commercial service procurement for the warfighter. It was initially chartered to support the procurement of commercial satellite communications (SATCOM) through SSC COMSO's Commercial Satellite Communications Office. The USSF plans to explore the possibility of expanding the WCF in the future to support the procurement of commercial services and other commercial capabilities in other mission areas.

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Small Businesses. COMSO also acutely understands the demand signal from the government and works with industry to bring it to reality. The close partnership of COMSO and SpaceWERX has led to an alignment of Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) funds focusing on high-payoff projects. Strategic Funding Increase (STRATFI) awards in the space enterprise are up five times from 2023 to 2025, awarding nearly 20 new STRATFIs in the last two years.

These collaborations are an important resource to the acquisition community to help businesses go from prototyping to operational deployment. Across the portfolio, 170 companies have secured \$2.8B in private capital since February 2024, validating the SpaceWERX model of leveraging government funds to attract significant venture investment. This strategy delivers a proven return on investment. Showcasing the incredible power of our partnership, an initial \$32M in SBIR funds for Tactically Responsive Space grew to \$1.3B in combined follow-on contracts and private investment.

Requirements. As the DAF leverages the commercial space market, we are opening the requirement trade space to deliver capability faster and at reduced cost through acquisition strategies such as RG-XX. The RG-XX program, the Geosynchronous Space Situational Awareness Program (GSSAP) follow-on program, changed the requirements process by opening the requirement trade space to allow new commercial competitors the opportunity to compete. In-turn, USSF reaped an immediate benefit. Within six months a new acquisition strategy was approved with a plan to competitively select several vendors to deliver capability at scale, at reduced cost, and on quicker timelines. This trailblazed a new model capitalizing on smart acquisition: expand the industrial base by lowering the barrier to entry for new companies, procure industry-driven solutions by setting objective-based requirements, and maximize flexible contracting with multi-award contracts to ensure continuous competition and innovation.

Competition. In addition to utilizing commercial capabilities, the DAF is also focused on capitalizing on authorities granted by Congress and implementing alternative contracting methods to encourage competition and reduce the possibility of single source or “vendor locks,” ultimately enhancing the final capability given to our warfighters. This is especially important as the need for space capabilities increases. For example, the U.S. launch demand surged in recent years, from 25 launches in 2017 to a record-breaking 180 launches in 2025, a 620% increase for the USSF Spaceports at Cape Canaveral/Kennedy and Vandenberg, requiring an agile approach to procuring launches.

National Security Space Launch. The National Security Space Launch (NSSL) Phase 3 dual-lane approach was designed to proactively respond to the growing number of launches, assuring access to space for missions that require the highest reliability as well as providing opportunities for emerging launch providers to compete for more risk-tolerant missions. Lane 1 allows a pool of launch providers to compete for risk-tolerant, commercial-like missions, and offers annual on-ramping opportunities for emerging providers and systems to compete when they meet the necessary requirements. New entrants can on-ramp 12 months prior to their first launch and compete for launch service task orders after their first successful launch. In March 2025, Lane 1 first on-ramp expanded the number of vendors from three to five. The next on-ramp is anticipated to be awarded in the third quarter of FY26.

Lane 2 is a competitively awarded block-buy contract encompassing approximately 54 missions, prioritizing the highest reliability. These missions are slated for procurement between FY25 and FY29. Lane 2 closely mirrors NSSL Phase 2, with key differences including an increase in launch providers from two to three and the requirement for awardees to be fully certified prior to being awarded missions. The Phase 3, Lane 2 contract was awarded in April 2025 to three providers. 60% of missions (approx. 28)

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will go to the best value provider, while 40% (approx. 19) go to the next best value provider, with an additional seven select missions to the third best value provider.

Protected Tactical SATCOM-Global. In July 2025, Protected Tactical SATCOM-Global (PTS-G) awarded an Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract and \$37.5M in initial firm-fixed price delivery orders to five vendors for SATCOM designs leveraging commercial capabilities. The second delivery order under the PTS-G IDIQ contract is expected to be awarded in the third quarter of FY26, and will develop the first four payloads, two X-band and two military Ka-band.

Software Pathways and Acquisition Tools. Over the years, software acquisition became a significant challenge for many critical programs. To address this shortcoming, the Office of ASAF (SA&I) shifted the mindset to focus development on modular, software-designed systems built in months, not years, delivering capabilities faster. The space acquisition community is accomplishing this shift by utilizing the Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA) pathway, Other Transaction Agreements (OTAs), Space Enterprise Consortium OTAs, and the Software Acquisition Pathway. These methods fundamentally change the way the space acquisition community contracts for capabilities and allows us to more rapidly seek out new vendors rather than being vendor locked for years or decades. This shift expanded the use of tools like OTAs by 470% and the Software Acquisition Pathway by 350% over the previous two years. Notably:

- The Future Operationally Resilient Ground Evolution (FORGE), the ground system and visualization capabilities to warfighters across Missile Warning and Tracking, Missile Defense, Battlespace Awareness, Technical Intelligence, and Civil/Environmental operations, uses a modular open systems approach (MOSA) software architecture to leverage and integrate commercial off-the-shelf, government off-the-shelf, and free and open-source-software solutions. FORGE has used a variety of contracting authorities, including OTAs, to expand the vendor participants and ensure cyber-resilient, modular, and scalable architecture.
- Advanced Tracking and Launch Analysis System (ATLAS) brings in current space domain awareness (SDA) command and control (C2) mission systems and enables a single agile software development and sustainment capability using the *Budget Activity 8: Software and Digital Technology Pilot Programs* authority. This underpins warfighters' ability to make accurate and timely decisions about space operations and respond in dynamic environments. The ATLAS Minimum Viable Capability Release was operationally accepted before the deadline set forth by the FY24 NDAA in September 2025, bringing an ultimately successful outcome for the program.
- The Electro-optical/Infrared Weather System (EWS) established a commercial environmental monitoring Data-as-a-Service model, where the USSF buys data from commercially owned and operated satellites. This model delivers on the military's two highest priority environmental monitoring capability gaps: cloud characterization and theater weather imagery.

Integration. Prioritizing integration in existing and new acquisition programs helps achieve speed through a system of systems, which can include common data layers, application programming interfaces, synchronized program schedules, and AI operation layers that unify commercial and military networks.

For example, the Unified Data Library integrates separate streams of data from our military, commercial, and allied satellites into a single, cloud-based platform. This integration creates a more complete space domain awareness picture for our Guardians, who can then quickly transform high-profile events into decision quality data for Senior Leaders. On 14 June 2025, the Tactical Unified Data Library (T-UDL)

supported U.S. Air Forces Central Counter-Drone Security for the U.S. Army's 250th Birthday event. This was the third time the T-UDL supported critical security operations in the National Capital Region.

Aligning Mission Areas. To align Acquisition Transformation with emerging threats, the DAF is focusing on mission areas to rapidly support the warfighter. Organizing programs by the missions they support empowers the acquisition community to efficiently acquire the capabilities needed across the space enterprise at speed.

The Resilient Missile Warning and Missile Tracking (MW/MT) Medium Earth Orbit (MEO) and Low Earth Orbit (LEO) fields a resilient multi-orbit missile warning and tracking architecture to deliver the next generation of homeland defense capabilities to mitigate advanced threats. The program office employed a combined agile-spiral development strategy, delivering capability sprints called "Epochs" and "Tranches" and leveraging OTAs to be able to more rapidly deliver a capability to the warfighter. This pivot to a proliferated constellation directly supports the National Defense Strategy and Executive Order 14186, *Golden Dome for America*, by delivering a resilient space order of battle and defensive and offensive architectures for joint warfighter needs. The MW/MT program also awards to multiple vendors to avoid sustainment vendor lock, using the MTA pathway for rapid delivery, as well as firm-fixed price contracts.

ACCOUNTABILITY: A BEDROCK PRINCIPLE

The space acquisition enterprise continues to push a culture of accountability and commercial integration throughout portfolios and continues to trend in a positive direction towards these goals. As part of this culture shift, the Office of ASAF (SA&I) has reviewed over 60 programs and made significant changes to several programs over the past year to deliver with speed and with discipline to prevent the repetition of past program challenges. Delivering capabilities to the warfighter late and with significant cost overruns is not only a disservice to the taxpayer, but also means fewer capabilities to the warfighter in the short term and fewer investments in the long term. We are continuing to reform acquisition strategies, delegate authorities, and fix processes to ensure executable systems that deliver at the speed of relevance for the warfighter. As part of that, our program managers are expected to be in the factories, test and operations floors, and learn about every promising new technology in the mission area, even when this disrupts their own program. It is important that the members of the space acquisition community always look for opportunities to bring additional innovation and speed to warfighter capabilities—we cannot be afraid of change.

Program Accountability. The President's Executive Order 14372, *Prioritizing the Warfighter in Defense Contracting*, provides clear guidance on actions to be taken when contractors underperform. Prior to this Executive Order, we began using PEO Scorecards to ensure that the PEOs of high-interest programs and external stakeholders were fully in sync. These scorecards provide leadership with actionable insights on program integration and system fielding to enable mission success.

The Office of ASAF (SA&I) has also used the Contractor Responsibility Watch List (CRWL) authorities given to the Space SAE by Congress in the FY25 NDAA to apply appropriate actions to underperforming companies allowing them to correct deficiencies and realign priorities. Combined with the Executive Order and the authorities granted by Congress, these tools have become critical to ensuring accountability across the space enterprise. PEOs have issued letters of concern where appropriate and issued unsatisfactory award fee scores. The Acting ASAF (SA&I) directed PEOs to conduct independent program assessments and held bi-weekly meetings with the PEOs and company leadership when needed.

Challenges to Overcome

As the space acquisition lead for the DAF, we remain committed to accountability and transforming the space architecture, but some challenging programs remain. We are proactively managing these programs, and I am working with PAEs and the program managers to ensure critical capabilities are provided to the warfighter in the timeframe needed to support the Joint Fight.

Next Generation Operational Control System. The Next Generation Operational Control System (OCX) achieved formal government acceptance in 2025, which marked the transition from contractor-led development testing to government-led development testing. As a result, extensive and more operationally relevant testing with actual GPS satellites, ground antennas, and user equipment led to an increase in finding extensive system issues across all sub-systems, many of which have not been resolved. For over 15 years, the program has experienced significant technical challenges, schedule slips, and associated cost growth, putting at risk the launch and capability of future GPS satellites. Due to continued OCX fielding delays, the current ground system, the Architecture Evolution Plan (AEP), has received several system enhancements over the years. Continued AEP modernization is now a viable option as systemic issues with OCX continue. As the challenges of the program get resolved, the USSF remains committed to fully meeting the requirements of GPS capabilities to military, allied, and civil users.

Satellite Communication Augmentation Resource. The Satellite Communication Augmentation Resource (SCAR) is another program facing some challenges. SCAR increases satellite control capacity through transportable and modular antenna systems that can support multiple spacecraft simultaneously during dynamic and contested operations. In January, the Space Rapid Capabilities Office issued a stop work order after a contract was deemed unexecutable, and as the Space SAE, I directed the PEO to develop a new acquisition strategy that aligns with the Acquisition Transformation efforts. SCAR continues to be a necessary and important enabler of national security space operations, and the DAF is committed to its success to support the Joint Force.

Protected Tactical SATCOM-Resilient. The Protected Tactical SATCOM (PTS) family of systems is a critical element of the Space Warfighting Analysis Center's Force Design, providing advanced anti-jam, protected tactical, all-weather resilient wideband SATCOM to warfighters. Last year, the Acting ASAF (SA&I) directed a review of the program, which found the previously approved Protected Tactical SATCOM-Resilient (PTS-R) acquisition strategy had potential high risks to both the cost and schedule of the program, inherent with the use of cost-type contracts for long-running, major development programs. In an effort to control costs and more quickly deliver incremental capability to the warfighter, the Acting ASAF (SA&I) canceled the source selection for PTS-R. Instead, he directed the rapid, iterative, and cost-controlled delivery of PTS capabilities through limited operationalization of the prototypes and the procurement of an additional enhanced prototype.

THE PATH AHEAD: THE YEAR OF EXECUTION

As a young Service, the USSF is building a culture that actively rejects bureaucracy and can scale to meet the global threats we face today and in the future. The USSF empowers our Guardians to challenge assumptions and are re-evaluating organizational structures to remove friction and accelerate decision-making from requirement to delivery and ensure our PAEs have the authority to make portfolio budget and requirement tradeoffs to quickly adopt commercial solutions.

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The Department must harness the speed and innovation of the commercial space sector. We must not only integrate existing commercial solutions but also ensure that emerging solutions can be brought to market quickly.

PNT Architecture. The Department is modernizing critical Positioning, Navigation, and Timing (PNT) capabilities through the GPS III Follow On (GPS III F) program. This program is essential for maintaining our strategic advantage and providing enhanced capabilities to the warfighter. The GPS III F program is executing to their current schedule and cost baselines and is on track to deliver the first two GPS III F space vehicles (SVs) in FY27. The current plan to contract two SVs per year until the full constellation of 22 SVs is procured and fielded.

Venture Capital Investments. In 2024, space investments hit \$7.8B, with 92% from venture capital investments—tripling over the past decade. These investments are so important because understanding venture capital investment is critical to the Department understanding and accessing a proven pool of vendors. Specifically, the USSF is able to compare company research, scale, and speed of private capital. In other words, it allows us to collaborate with a new financial ecosystem that fuses public dollars with private capital – from venture funds to equity partners – all to accelerate the deployment of resilient, interconnected systems.

Dual-Use Readiness. Many companies are developing technologies that can not only be sold commercially but also serve a dual purpose for military application. These technologies can save money and deliver capabilities now. In many cases, the USSF no longer needs to invest millions and years building bespoke systems. We are leveraging agile acquisition tools and partnerships with the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) to bring these cost-savings and technological advancements to the USSF.

AI and Autonomous Systems. The pace of global threats not only requires us as a nation to deliver capabilities, but to respond to threats in real time faster. That is why the USSF is working to deepen the integration of AI and autonomous systems.

- Across the broader space and intelligence enterprise, operational AI capabilities such as the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency’s Maven ecosystem, including the Maven Smart System, demonstrate the value of rapidly transitioning data-centric, AI-enabled mission tools into fielded use at scale. These efforts highlight the importance of integrating AI into operational workflows, accelerating analyst-to-operator timelines, and leveraging commercial innovation. We are applying these same principles across USSF mission areas, including space domain awareness, operational command and control, and resilient space architectures.
- The USSF Operational Test and Training Infrastructure (OTTI) PEO fields systems that STARCOM needs to operate the National Space Test and Training Complex, including live or physical space and ground assets, simulators for exercises and Combat Forces Command training, and the infrastructure to tie them together. OTTI is focused this year on expanding the Space Warfighter Operational Readiness Domain (SWORD), the simulation engine behind the Space Flag exercises that occur three times per year, putting over 300 Guardians through red/blue models. OTTI will continue to expand on SWORD by connecting crew mission trainers into the platform, growing the red threat model inventory with additional intelligence, including higher classification levels. OTTI also secured a 12-month contract for “Ask Sage” AI licenses, boosting DAF and USSF innovation and efficiency with secure generative AI.

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- The Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) is integrating AI tools like MACHINA, which automatically sorts through thousands of detected but unknown space objects so our Guardians can focus on potential threats, not noise.
- Multiple operational contracts, including a \$27M USSF award, was awarded to build AI-driven adversaries for orbital wargames and a Phase III AFRL contract for "Space Domain Awareness – Exploiting In-Space Sensors" (SDA-EIS), cementing their role in the threat simulation and SDA architecture.
- USSF holds an annual AI challenge and invites military and government personnel to develop innovative AI-powered solutions that improve efficiency, capability, and decision-making for the Service.

Allies and Partners. Consistent with Executive Order 14268, *Reforming Foreign Defense Sales to Improve Speed and Accountability*, and Executive Order 14383, *Establishing an American First Arms Transfer Strategy*, acquisition strategies must also include “Allied by Design” focus to strengthen our international partnerships and Foreign Military Sales (FMS), as well as be used as a tool to expand domestic industrial production capacity. The USSF FMS has experienced substantial growth since the establishment of the USSF and is poised for further 10x growth in the next one to two years.

- Space Defense Characterization and Control System. During Exercise KEEN EDGE 26 earlier this year, a bilateral U.S.-Japan command post exercise, AFRL delivered the Space Defense Characterization and Control System (SDCCS) system. The tool provided a real-time, multi-domain, picture of red/blue alerts and analytics for operators across INDOPACOM and USSPACECOM, unifying situational awareness and improving coordinated command and control for complex, large-scale operations between space, ground, air, and maritime domains—a new capability for both commands. This event marked the final transition to operational sustainment partner SSC System Delta 85, ensuring long-term support for key combatant commands.
- QZSS-Hosted Payload launch. In February 2025, a U.S. space domain awareness payload hosted on Japan's Quasi-Zenith Satellite 6 successfully launched on a Japanese H-3 launch vehicle from the Yoshinobu Launch Complex at the Aerospace Exploration Agency’s Tanegashima Space Center in Japan. This is the first bilateral U.S.-Japan cooperative space effort focused on national security, and the first of two launches as part of the JAXA Quasi-Zenith Satellite System Hosted Payload program. The satellite will deliver near real time data to the Space Surveillance Network, bolstering the Department’s understanding of the Geosynchronous Orbit (GEO) regime above the Indo-Pacific region.
- Republic of Korea FMS. In May 2025, the final letter of offer and acceptance to create a new FMS case for Shared Early Warning Systems was signed by the Republic of Korea Minister of National Defense. This strengthens the U.S. partnership with an important ally, while bringing additional capability to the Republic of Korea to counter threats.
- Enhanced Polar System-Recapitalization. The EPS-R program consists of two Extremely High Frequency tactical MILSATCOM payloads hosted on Space Norway's Arctic Satellite Broadband Mission (ASBM) satellites. The ASBM mission launched in August 2024, represents a historic achievement, marking the first time an operational U.S. military payload has been hosted on an

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international ally space vehicle. The EPS-R program delivers enhanced and protected MILSATCOM to U.S. and allied forces operating in the Arctic region.

2026 Deliveries of Key Capabilities. We are expecting to deliver several key capabilities to the warfighter that represent successes for acquisition transformation and rapid delivery to the warfighter. These include several programs expected to reach Operational Acceptance, including:

- Meadowlands. Meadowlands, a tactical electronic warfare system designed to detect, identify, and disrupt adversary communications systems and a key component of the U.S. military's electromagnetic warfare architecture, is expected to reach operational acceptance in spring 2026. This milestone is the result of integration and collaboration between Combat Forces Command and SSC, with the support and feedback from operational Guardians to ensure weapon system sustainment meets current and future warfighting needs.
- Weather System Follow-on-Microwave. After the first Weather System Follow-on-Microwave (WSF-M) satellite reached operational acceptance in April 2025, full operational acceptance of the satellite is planned by September 2026. WSF-M is part of the USSF's hybrid architecture for weather monitoring capabilities and will ensure warfighters continue to have accurate and timely weather data as legacy weather satellites are replaced.
- Next-Gen OPIR GEO. Next-Gen OPIR GEO (NGG) SV-1 is available for launch and planned for Initial Launch Capability this year. NGG will be a key enabler of the transition to resilient MW/MT future architecture, delivering improved core missile warning capabilities to detect emerging missiles, while replenishing legacy systems with significant improvements in resiliency.
- Navigation Technology Satellite-3. In 2026, AFRL's Navigation Technology Satellite 3 (NTS-3) will demonstrate end-to-end enterprise capability with space, ground, and user equipment to increase satellite navigation technologies and architectures. NTS-3 launched in August 2025 and to provide the next generation of robust and agile anti-jam and anti-spoof position, navigation, and timing.
- Enhanced Polar System-Recapitalization. EPS-R is expected to achieve operational acceptance this year. This milestone signifies that EPS-R has met its technical and tactical operational requirements, ensuring its ability to effectively support operational missions in the Arctic and provide vital secure communication capabilities to U.S. and allied forces operating in the region until next-generation protected MILSATCOM systems come online in the mid-2030s.

CONCLUSION

The Year of Execution represents a pivotal shift for the space enterprise. This significant Acquisition Transformation consolidates mission areas into more logical portfolios and enables more rapid trades, development, and fielding. The way ahead not only requires the DAF and the USSF to prioritize the delivery of operationally relevant warfighting capabilities, but to also invest in one of our most important resources, our Guardians. Ultimately, this will increase lethality and readiness by leveraging an emergent and rapidly evolving space industry to capitalize on new industry partners and ingrain essential acquisition processes into acquisition culture.

Executing this fundamental cultural shift represents a core element of our strategy and solidifies three unwavering principles: speed, accountability, and integration. We are moving with urgency to deliver

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capabilities, holding ourselves and our industry partners accountable for performance, and leveraging the full innovative power of the commercial sector. This is no longer just a reform effort; it is the new standard for how we do business.

The challenges we face in the space domain are significant, but our resolve is, and must be, absolute. We are actively shaping the future of our nation, empowered by Guardians and the professional civilian acquisition workforce, driven by a culture of performance and accountability, and allied with the brightest minds in industry. These dedicated professionals, both military and civilian, demonstrate daily the unique skills necessary to rapidly deliver our nation's space capabilities ensuring space superiority. We are building a force that is agile, resilient, and ready to deter and win.

With your continued partnership and support, our Year of Execution will net successes across the enterprise, ensuring that the United States remains the undisputed leader in space. The Office of ASAF (SA&I) will continue to deliver the game-changing capabilities our warfighters need to defend this nation and its interests.