

Opening Statement by Chairman Jim Cooper
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces
April 3, 2019

I would like to welcome the witnesses to this hearing. We appreciate Assistant Secretary of Defense Kenneth Rapuano, General John Raymond, and GAO Director of Acquisition and Sourcing Management, Cristina Chaplain, joining us today.

The written testimony that we have received is a study in contrasts. Secretary Rapuano gives us a lengthy but vague pep talk. General Raymond is far more specific and focused, as befits the Air Force Space Commander, but only gives us the “glass half full” summary of a wide range of military space activities. Ms. Chaplain gives us a hard-hitting, “glass half empty” summary of a wide variety of space program failures and disappointments, along with a litany of refusals of the Air Force and DoD to improve their space management practices.

I encourage all subcommittee members to read the GAO testimony in detail because it builds on years of similar work by the GAO, work that numerous DoD officials and Congresses have systematically ignored. I can assure you, however, that our potential adversaries have not ignored the GAO’s findings. In fact, they have probably celebrated them. Many of our colleagues in this Congress, particularly in the U.S. Senate, are the last to know.

In brief summary, the Rumsfeld Commission in 2001 warned us of a “Space Pearl Harbor.” In 2008, the Allard Commission found that “no one is in charge” of our military space programs. In 2016, the GAO concluded that there are 60 different stakeholders in DoD, each with the power to cripple a space program but none with the ability to lead. In the GAO’s current report, the GAO documents numerous satellite program failures, delays, and cost-overruns, in addition to refusing to even “routinely monitor the size, mix, and location of its space acquisition workforce.” We always hear the military praise the troops, so this is a jarring critique if the GAO determines we don’t really know what our space acquisition workers are doing.

In response to this damning criticism, the Pentagon eliminated its Space Command in 2002, gradually substituting the position of a PDSA, or Space Advisor. I am sure that really scared the Russians and Chinese. Now, I am thankful that we are returning, belatedly to a Space Command, but we also need unchallenged space superiority. That is what this hearing is about.

I encourage this subcommittee to become expert on all the issues relating to a Space Force or a Space Corps, whatever you want to call it. We simply must improve our satellite and space capabilities, NOW.