

Good afternoon, and thank you to everyone for joining us here today.

Since the dawn of the space age, United States leadership has put a man on the moon; allowed us to see to the edge of the universe; saved countless lives by helping to better predict hurricanes; and revolutionized the way the peoples of our world communicate.

Our country's leadership over the years in helping to establish a clear understanding among all nations that the peaceful use of space is of paramount importance has repaid us untold benefits, and promises to increasingly do so in the future. Our country owns or operates 443 of the 845 active satellites around our planet – a 100 billion-dollar-a-year industry. Global Positioning System (GPS) technology is taking-off and even space tourism is becoming more and more of a reality.

And our military and intelligence capabilities have become huge beneficiaries of a weapons-free space. Without space, our smart bombs would not be as precise. Without space, our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq would not have the real-time information they need. Without space, crucial intelligence-gathering would simply vanish. Satellites have quite literally become the eyes and ears of our national security.

However, there are potentially ominous clouds on the horizon.

Space experts, some of whom we'll hear from at today's hearing, charge that over the last handful of years the current Administration has undertaken a series of actions and changes in policies that could have a profound impact on the future of space and the future of our national security.

Exhibit A is President Bush's new National Space Policy.

Though the new policy had been widely anticipated for years, the unclassified version was stealthily posted on the web late on the Friday afternoon prior to Columbus Day weekend in

2006. The rest of the world – both our allies and our potential adversaries – took notice, particularly at its aggressiveness and unilateral tone.

The previous space policy spoke of the need for, and I quote, a “stable and balanced national space program,” one in which “[t]he United States will pursue greater levels of partnership and cooperation in national and international space activities and work with other nations to ensure the continued exploration and use of space for peaceful purposes.”

The Bush Administration policy, on the other hand, treats space as one more battlefield besides air, land, and sea; and states unequivocally, and I quote:

“The United States will oppose the development of new legal regimes or other restrictions that seek to prohibit or limit U.S. access to or use of space. Proposed arms control agreements or restrictions must not impair the right of the United States to conduct research, development, testing, and operations or other activities in space for U.S. national interests.”

But the aggressive and unilateral record of this Administration is not just limited to this one document. For example:

In 2002, the United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty on the grounds that it needed greater capabilities against rogue states following the September 11 terrorist attacks.

In September 2004, then Undersecretary of State John Bolton stated: “We are not prepared to negotiate on the so-called arms race in outer space. We just don’t see that as a worthwhile enterprise.”

In October 2005, the United States was the only country in the world to vote against a United Nations resolution calling on the need for a treaty to limit the weaponization of space. 160 countries voted in favor.

The Air Force doctrine during the Bush Administration has also been criticized as being overly unilateral and aggressive. Air Force doctrine and top officials repeatedly speak of “space dominance,” with one document noting: “Space superiority provides freedom to attack.”

Our hearing today will explore the Bush Administration’s space policies and actions, and what impact they have had and will have in the future.

Will others in our world use the Administration’s language and actions as justification and cover to build their own weapons capabilities in space, thereby threatening the very assets and advantages we seek to protect?

Or will other countries in the world ramp up their own space weapons capabilities no matter what U.S. policies and actions are – in other words, is the weaponization of space inevitable and to think otherwise would only cause us to lose ground?

Our hearing will also explore the apparently successful anti-satellite missile test by China earlier this year. China has long been viewed as a potential competitor to U.S. interests in space, and a potential threat because of its emerging space program and the increased frequency of its satellite launches. And we have watched them closely. We were well aware when they attempted two anti-satellite missile tests in 2005 and 2006.

So it should not have been a surprise to anyone when China used a ground-based ballistic missile to successfully hit their own orbiting weather satellite in January of this year. We knew when they were going to conduct the test and were certain which satellite they were going to hit. We stepped up monitoring of the satellite and Chinese launch pads. We knew that the test would cause thousands of shards of space debris to float around for decades in low-earth orbit, potentially harming anything in their path.

But following the destruction of the satellite, the silence was deafening. Though they didn’t do anything to hide their launch preparations, the Chinese did not initially own up to the test. And the U.S. apparently decided not to do anything beforehand to try to prevent the Chinese test.

Here are the repercussions of the Administration's decision to watch silently as the test took place. I'd like to play a short simulation of the debris caused by the Chinese test, which is posted on the web at CelesTrak.com and which uses debris data from the Air Force. And remember as you watch this video that a marble-sized piece of debris in low earth orbit would hit a satellite with the same force as a one-ton safe dropped from a five-story building on earth.

I understand that this single Chinese test alone raised the threat to satellites in frequent low-earth orbits by as much as 40 percent. This incident should caution all of us about the stakes of getting space policy right.

What, if anything, could our country – and our allies and partners around the world – have done to prevent all that debris? What should have been done, if anything?

This hearing will explore the Administration's space policies and actions and ask the simple question of whether this is the path we should be going down?

By alienating friends and potential adversaries alike, is the current approach weakening our national security through its actions and inaction towards space policy?

Should our country take a leadership role in engaging our allies bilaterally and through multilateral institutions, such as the Conference on Disarmament and the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in order to preserve space for peaceful and commercial interests? Should we work with other countries to lay out rules-of-the-road for space conduct; to put in place confidence-building measures; and to work together to limit space debris?

Or is the Administration's approach the only real option for us in a world in which it and some others contend international cooperation and treaties will only serve to weaken our national security assets and interests?

Up until the present, space has been a frontier that has been used peacefully by all of mankind, in many respects because it is inherently a global commodity.

As the undeniable leader in space, the United States' actions and policies will play a huge role in shaping the future of space and how it impacts our economy, our science, our exploration, and our national security. We must act with a sense of responsibility here and to ask tough questions now while this renewed interest in the weaponization of space is in its infancy. We must ask tough questions now before it is too late.

Over the first 50 years of space exploration and use, we know where U.S. leadership has taken us. This hearing will centrally ask where U.S. leadership should take us over the next 50.

Thank you, and I now yield to the Ranking Member for an opening statement.