



Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

Good Afternoon!

Remember when Washington used to slow down during July? That's not the case these days, at least when it comes to space. While the Senate and House wrangled over the 2027 defense budget request, the Army established a space operations branch, and the FCC prepared to vote on overhauling the satellite licensing process. On the international stage, eight NATO allies announced they will cooperate on the development of a military satellite constellation, European and MENA space cooperation is becoming increasingly symbiotic, and NASA Administrator Isaacman confirmed the U.S. is "very much" in a space race with China.

All this and more in this edition of Akin's Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update.

On The Hill

Articles and Quotes

Senate Panel to Examine Record \$1.5 Trillion Defense Budget Ask (*Legis1*)

The United States Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources will hold a **closed briefing** on July 15 to examine the Department of War's (DoW) fiscal year (FY) 2027 budget request, which proposes a record \$1.5 trillion in defense spending. The request includes more than \$100 billion for the defense industrial base, \$48.8 billion to strengthen critical mineral and domestic supply chains, and \$17.1 billion for the proposed Golden Dome missile defense initiative, while lawmakers continue to seek additional details on how Golden Dome funding would be allocated. The closed briefing will provide senators with additional information on the Trump administration's defense priorities before Congress continues consideration of the FY 2027 budget request.

House GOP Impasse Over Defense Bill Creates Bottleneck for Broader Pentagon Agenda (*Inside Defense*)

House consideration of the FY 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) was delayed after House Republican leaders were unable to advance the procedural rule needed to begin floor

debate, postponing action until after the July 4 recess. The delay compresses the legislative schedule for the House's defense agenda, which also includes consideration of the FY 2027 defense appropriations bill, the Trump administration's request for supplemental defense funding tied to operations following the conflict with Iran, and a proposed \$350 billion defense reconciliation package. The Senate has not yet begun marking up its FY 2027 defense appropriations bill as negotiations over overall defense and non-defense spending levels continue.

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

Rep. Kevin Mullin (D-CA) **introduced** the Methane Removal Research and Innovation Act of 2026 (**H.R. 9478**), which would require the Secretary of Energy to establish a research initiative to develop technologies to remove methane from the atmosphere.

Rep. Ken Calvert (R-CA) **introduced** the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2027 (**H.R. 9495**), which would make appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2027.

Rep. George Whitesides (D-CA) **introduced** the Wildfire Response Modernization Act (**H.R. 9534**), which would direct the Secretary of the Air Force to procure space-based commercial data and end products to support the efforts of the Department of Defense and the wildfire mission of the United States Northern Command.

Please find our Space Legislation Tracker **here**.

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(June 30, 2026 - July 17, 2026)

On June 30, the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Subcommittee on Communications and Technology held an oversight **hearing** of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

On July 1, the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (SST) held a **hearing** on advancing America's space weather capabilities.

On July 14, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) will hold a **hearing** to consider four nominations.

On July 14, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) will hold a closed **briefing** on intelligence matters.

On July 15, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) will hold a closed hearing on DoW's FY 2027 budget request.

On July 15, SSCI will hold a hearing to consider the nomination of Hon. Walter "Jay" Clayton to be Director of National Intelligence.

On July 16, SASC will hold a hearing to consider the nomination of Lieutenant General Douglas Schiess, USSF to be general and Chief of Space Operations.

In the White House/Executive Branch

Articles and Quotes

FCC to Vote on Satellite Licensing Overhaul July 22 (*SpaceNews*)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced it will vote on July 22 on the Space Modernization Order, which would overhaul the agency's satellite licensing process by replacing existing Part 25 regulations with a new Part 100 framework. The proposal is intended to streamline licensing for increasingly large satellite constellations by shortening review timelines, reducing administrative requirements, expanding the types of minor license modifications that do not require prior approval, and reducing the standard public notice period from 30 days to 15 days. The order would also require operators to share satellite tracking data with an approved space situational awareness provider and seeks additional comment on new experimental licensing approaches. The vote comes as Congress considers the Satellite and Telecommunications (SAT) Streamlining Act (S. 3639), which would similarly establish deadlines and reforms for the FCC's satellite licensing process.

Pentagon Names New Defense Policy Board, Nearly a Year After Renewal (*Inside Defense*)

DoW announced the appointment of 15 members to the reestablished Defense Policy Board, an independent advisory panel that provides recommendations to senior defense officials on national security and defense policy. The board will be chaired by Robert Lighthizer, with Norm Coleman serving as vice chair. The newly appointed members also include Marc Andreessen and Blake Masters. The appointments come nearly a year after the Pentagon reestablished the board following its dissolution in 2025.

NASA Awards More CLPS Contracts, May Send Mars Rover Engineering Model to the Moon (*Space Policy Online*)

On June 30, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) awarded nearly \$600 million in new Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) contracts to support robotic lunar

deliveries as part of its Moon Base initiative, which aims to send up to 10 robotic landers to the Moon annually beginning in 2027. NASA also announced it is evaluating whether to repurpose an existing engineering model of a Mars rover, known as PROMISE, for a lunar mission to the Moon's south pole. Because the rover is powered by a radioisotope thermoelectric generator, it could survive the 14-day lunar night, unlike current commercially developed lunar landers.

BOEM Explores Using Oil Infrastructure for Space Launches *(Politico)*

On July 7, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) **announced** a 30-day public comment period to evaluate whether offshore oil and gas infrastructure on the Outer Continental Shelf could be repurposed or whether new offshore facilities could be developed to support commercial space launch, re-entry and recovery operations. The agency is seeking input on the technical feasibility, regulatory framework, environmental considerations and interagency coordination required to support offshore launch infrastructure. BOEM stated that offshore launch sites could expand U.S. launch capacity, increase operational flexibility, reduce constraints on growing launch demand and strengthen both commercial and national security space capabilities.

Army Establishes New Branch Dedicated to Space Operations *(Defense Scoop)*

The U.S. Army officially established the Space Operations Branch, creating a dedicated career field for soldiers specializing in space operations by consolidating Army Space Operations Officers and enlisted Tactical Space Operations Specialists under the military occupational specialty (MOS) established in 2025. The new branch elevates space operations from a functional area to a basic branch and is intended to provide specialized space-based capabilities that support Army and joint force operations while denying, disrupting and degrading adversary activities in the space domain. The Army said the branch will also assume responsibilities previously carried out by personnel temporarily assigned from other branches, helping build a permanent cadre of space professionals to support multidomain operations and theater strike effects groups.

GAO Flags Satellite Costs, Launch Risks in Space Force Portfolio *(SpaceNews)*

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that while the U.S. Space Force has made progress on several major space acquisition programs, it continues to face challenges including cost growth, schedule delays, workforce shortages and limited adoption of digital engineering practices. The report highlighted increased costs and launch uncertainty for the Next Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared (Next Gen OPIR GEO) missile-warning satellite program due to software development challenges and delays associated with the Vulcan launch vehicle, while noting that Congress has restored funding for the Next Gen OPIR Polar program despite the administration's proposal to terminate it. GAO also cited integration risks for the Protected Tactical SATCOM-Global program, confirmed the earlier decision to cancel the Next Generation Operational Control System (OCX) for GPS, and warned that workforce reductions could hinder the Space Force's ability to support a growing number of national security launches and certify additional launch providers.

Federal Agency Space News

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

[BOEM Initiates First Step to Explore Potential for Outer Continental Shelf Space Launch & Recovery](#) (July 7, 2026)

Federal Communications Commission

[FCC Announces Tentative Agenda for July Open Meeting](#) (July 1, 2026)

Government Accountability Office

[DoD Is Pursuing Efforts to Collaborate with Allies and Partners but Needs to Address Key Challenges](#) (July 8, 2026)

[Weapon Systems Annual Assessment: Requiring Mature Technologies Could Enable Shift to Rapid Delivery](#) (July 2, 2026)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

[NASA Seeks Industry Input on Second Phase of Commercial Space Stations](#) (July 6, 2026)

[NASA's CAPSTONE Completes Extended Mission Testing Lunar Technologies](#) (July 6, 2026)

[Teams Make Contact with Spacecraft Set to Boost NASA's Swift](#) (July 3, 2026)

[NextSTEP-3 B: Moon Base Demonstrations](#) (June 30, 2026)

U.S. Space Force

[Space Force Delivers Rapid Tech Awards for Commercial Industry](#) (July 8, 2026)

U.S Department of Defense

[Joint Interagency Task Force 401 Publishes Counter-Drone Handbook](#) (July 8, 2026)

[DoW Establishes Direct Reporting Portfolio Manager for Unmanned Systems](#) (July 1, 2026)

[DoW Establishes New Defense Policy Board](#) (June 29, 2026)

International

Articles & Quotes

Eight NATO Allies Launch HALO Satellite Constellation Initiative (*Defense News*)

Eight North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies announced the Hybrid Alliance Layered Operations in Space (HALO) initiative to explore development of a multinational satellite constellation that would integrate nationally owned military satellites into a networked architecture. The effort, led by Denmark, Canada, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Turkey, is intended to improve alliance resilience by supporting high-speed military communications, intelligence and missile tracking while reducing vulnerabilities associated with individual national constellations. Separately, Canada joined NATO's STARLIFT initiative to expand responsive launch capabilities across allied spaceports, Spain joined the Alliance Persistent Surveillance from Space program to contribute satellite imagery for maritime surveillance and Turkey announced plans to develop two additional high-resolution satellites.

Inside the Deepening Ties Between Europe and the Middle East (*Payload*)

Latitude announced an agreement with Oman's Etlaq Spaceport this week, giving the French launcher clearance to stage the debut launch of its rocket from Omani shores in late 2027. While the international partnership stands out in an era of increasing focus on European launch sovereignty, it's just the latest in a growing number of partnerships between space organizations in Europe and the Middle East. For Europe, the Middle East offers access to a new set of customers, new capital and new missions. Nations in the Middle East, meanwhile, are extracting European know-how to quickly build and deploy new space-based capabilities.

NASA Administrator Says, 'We Are Very Much in a Space Race Right Now' Against China (*CBS News*)

In a CBS interview, NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman stated that the United States is "very much in a space race" with China, emphasizing that the two countries' planned crewed lunar landings are separated by only months. He said Artemis III, scheduled for next year, will test critical lunar landing systems in Earth orbit using multiple launch vehicles ahead of a planned crewed lunar landing during Artemis IV in 2028. Isaacman also said NASA plans to begin deploying infrastructure for a lunar base through frequent robotic missions beginning in 2027, with the goal of establishing a sustained human presence on the Moon in the early 2030s.

Check out below for comment opportunities, requests for proposals, notices of proposed rulemaking and a look at the week ahead in space events:

Comment Opportunities (RFIs)

Protected Anti-Jam Tactical SATCOM Enterprise Mission Management (PATSEMM) Sources Sought

Department of Defense

Close Date: July 13, 2026

Strategic Partnerships for NASA Data Center Infrastructure

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: July 17, 2026

Combatant Commanders Integrated Command and Control System (CCIC2S) Service Life Extension Program (SLEP)

Department of Defense

Close Date: July 20, 2026

Spacecraft Camera Requirements for Diverse Mission Applications

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: July 23, 2026

Remote Data Concentrator (RDC) Requirements for Diverse Mission Applications

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: July 23, 2026

Potential Use of the Outer Continental Shelf for Offshore Space Launch and Re-Entry Activities

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

Close Date: August 7, 2026

NASA To Research, Evaluate, Assess, and Treat (TREAT) Astronauts Act

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: August 10, 2026

Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory (NBL) Facility Commercial Utilization

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: September 30, 2026

Private Sector Participation in Domestic and International Events on Spaceflight Safety, Responsible Practices, and Commercial Space

Department of State

Close Date: December 31, 2026

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

Foundation GEOINT (FG) Change Detection (CD) Commercial Solutions Opening (CSO)

National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Close Date: July 21, 2026

Engineering Services and Science Capability Augmentation (ESSCA) II

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: August 6, 2026

Commercial SmallSat Data Acquisition (CSDA) Program Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) On-Ramp 2

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: September 5, 2026

Notices of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRMs)

No new proposed rules.

Upcoming Space Events

Deep Space Advanced Radar (DARC) Interim Contractor Support (ICS) Industry Day

USSF / SSC / SYD 85

July 20-22, 2026

Space Investors Forum

NSSA

July 21, 2026

Securing Space and Protecting Our World: Cyber Security Across Space and Terrestrial Systems

GW Space Policy Institute

The Aerospace Corporation

July 21, 2026

Humans to the Moon and Mars (H2M2) Summit

Explore Mars

July 21-23, 2026

2026 NASA Exploration Science Forum

NASA

July 21-23, 2026

3rd India Space Policy Conference

IAFI

July 22-23, 2026

Orbital Data Centers & Space Sustainability Implications

SWF

July 29, 2026

COPSAR 2026

Committee on Space Research

August 1-9, 2026

2026 Taiwan Lunar Symposium

Taiwan Space Union

August 9-13, 2026

2026 Southern Space Conference

SIAA

August 11-12, 2026

4th Texas Area Planetary Science Meeting

TAPS

August 20-21, 2026

40th Small Satellite Conference

Small Sat

August 23-26, 2026

3rd IAA Conference on AI for Space

IAA

August 26, 2026

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Questions?

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