



## Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

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Good Afternoon!

*Another week, another reminder that space and defense come with sky-high costs. Congress is pushing back on a proposed 23% cut to NASA's budget with a \$24.4 billion plan, while the Trump administration has requested congressional approval for a \$1.5 trillion defense budget. Meanwhile, the Congressional Budget Office estimates the Golden Dome missile defense initiative could carry a \$1.2 trillion price tag over the next two decades.*

*Across the globe, the space race continues to heat up. The U.S. and China are increasingly competing over space-related projects in Argentina and Chile. At the same time, the U.S. and six allies are developing a joint concept of operations to better defend space assets, while the European Space Agency is advancing its reusable "Space Rider" orbital vehicle, capable of months-long missions and return-to-Earth payloads.*

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

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### On The Hill

#### Articles and Quotes

##### [Congress Defies White House on Science Funding](#) (Legis1)

House appropriators advanced the fiscal year (FY) 2027 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies spending bill that diverges from several elements of the Trump administration's proposed budget request, particularly on science and space funding. The House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee rejected the administration's proposed 23% reduction to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and instead advanced a \$24.4 billion funding proposal, while also voting to reduce National Science Foundation (NSF) funding by 20%. The administration's original request proposed significant reductions to NASA science missions, International Space Station (ISS) funding and STEM engagement programs. The legislation also proposes a roughly 5% reduction for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The full House Appropriations Committee, chaired by Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK), is expected to consider the bill amid broader debate over executive branch spending priorities and congressional control of the appropriations process. Commercial space companies, scientific organizations, and law enforcement stakeholders have also increased lobbying activity related to

the legislation, including advocacy tied to NASA programs, weather research and Department of Justice grant initiatives.

### **Trump asks Congress to Approve \$1.5 Trillion Defense Budget** *(News 9)*

President Donald Trump requested that Congress approve a \$1.5 trillion defense budget, which would combine approximately \$1.15 trillion in discretionary defense spending with an additional \$350 billion in mandatory funding proposed through the reconciliation process. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth defended the request during testimony before the House and Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittees, stating that the proposal is intended to maintain U.S. military capabilities, strengthen the defense industrial base, and support long-term military modernization efforts. Members of Congress raised concerns about relying on reconciliation funding for a significant portion of the proposal. Rep. Cole, chair of the House Appropriations Committee, stated that the reconciliation strategy could present political risks because continued funding would depend on future congressional support.

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## **Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates**

Rep. Dave Min (D-CA) **introduced** the Indo-Pacific Space Partnership Act of 2026 (**H.R. 8584**), which would require the Commander of the United States Space Command to submit a feasibility report on expanding the Multinational Force Operation Olympic Defender.

Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA) **introduced** a resolution Supporting the first Friday of May as “National Space Day” in recognition of the significant positive impact the aerospace community has and will continue to have on the United States of America (**H. Res. 1242**).

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) introduced a bill making appropriations for national security, Department of State and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2027, and for other purposes (**H.R. 8595**).

Rep. John Moolenaar (R-MI) **introduced** the Protecting U.S. Farmland and Sensitive Sites From Foreign Adversaries Act (**H.R. 8700**), which aims to protect U.S. food security, provide the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States greater jurisdiction over land purchases, impose special guards against foreign adversary purchases of land in the United States near sensitive sites and expand the definition of sensitive sites.

Sen. Jon Husted (R-OH) **introduced** the Expanding Appalachia’s Broadband Access Act (**S. 4459**), which would require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on the capability of the Appalachian Regional Commission to include satellites in broadband projects.

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

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## Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(May 12, 2026 - May 22, 2026)

On May 12, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense (HAC-D) held a hearing on the Department of Defense budget.

On May 12, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) held open and closed hearings to examine the posture of the Department of the Army in review of the Defense Authorization Request for FY 2027 and the Future Years Defense Program.

On May 12, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense (SAC-D) held a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for FY 2027 for the Department of Defense.

On May 12, HAC-D held a hearing on the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Budget.

On May 12, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) held a closed hearing on intelligence matters.

On May 12, the SASC Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee held open and closed hearings to examine the United States Special Operations Command.

On May 12, the SASC Airland Subcommittee held hearings to examine Air Force modernization in review of the Defense Authorization Request for FY 2027 and the Future Years Defense Program.

On May 13, SASC held open and closed hearings to examine the Department of Energy and National Nuclear Security Administration atomic energy defense activities in review of the Defense Authorization Request for FY 2027 and the Future Years Nuclear Security Program.

On May 13, HAC held a full committee markup of the FY 2027 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies bill.

On May 13, the HASC Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee held a hearing on the Department of the Air Force FY 2027 Budget Request for Seapower and Projection Forces.

On May 13, the SASC Cybersecurity Subcommittee held a closed hearing to examine cyber operations and readiness for the fourth quarter of FY 2025 and the first quarter of FY 2026.

On May 14, the HASC Cyber, Information Technologies and Innovation Subcommittee held a posture hearing of the Department of Defense.

On May 14, HASC held a hearing to examine the Department of the Navy FY 2027 Budget Request.

On May 15, HASC held a hearing on the Army FY 2027 Budget Request.

On May 18, the HAC Departments of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and

Related Agencies Subcommittee held a budget [hearing](#) on the Department of Transportation.

On May 19, HASC will hold a [hearing](#) on U.S. Military Posture and National Security Challenges in the Greater Middle East and Africa.

On May 19, SASC will hold open and closed [hearings](#) to examine the posture of the Department of the Navy in review of the Defense Authorization Request for FY 2027 and the Future Years Defense Program.

On May 19, SAC-D will hold a [hearing](#) to review the President's FY 2027 Budget Request for the Army.

On May 19, the SAC Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee will hold a [hearing](#) to review the President's FY 2027 Budget Request for the Department of Transportation.

On May 19, the SASC Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee will hold a [hearing](#) to examine the science and technology priorities in review of the Defense Authorization Request for FY 2027 and the Future Years Defense Program.

On May 20, HASC will hold a [hearing](#) on the Air Force FY 2027 Budget Request.

## In the White House/Executive Branch

### Articles and Quotes

#### **Golden Dome Could Cost \$1.2 Trillion Over 20 Years, CBO Says** (*Air & Space Forces*)

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that the Pentagon's Golden Dome missile defense initiative could cost approximately \$1.2 trillion over 20 years, significantly exceeding the Pentagon's public estimate of roughly \$185 billion over 10 years. The report outlined a notional layered missile defense architecture that includes space-based interceptors, ground-based missile defense systems, regional interceptor networks and satellite sensing systems designed to counter intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), hypersonic glide vehicles and cruise missiles. CBO estimated that the largest cost driver would be a proposed constellation of 7,800 space-based interceptor satellites, projected to cost \$743 billion over two decades. The report stated that while such a system could defend against limited attacks from regional adversaries or smaller-scale strikes from peer competitors, it could still be overwhelmed by a large-scale attack from Russia or China. The report also noted uncertainty regarding the strategic implications of the system and suggested that the Pentagon's lower cost projections may reflect a more limited architecture or reliance on funding from other defense accounts. Golden Dome Director Gen. Michael Guetlein previously disputed outside cost estimates, arguing they rely on assumptions that do not reflect the program's classified architecture. Guetlein also emphasized the use of advanced technologies and existing infrastructure to control costs.

## AI ‘Explainability’ Is a ‘Major Concern’ for National Reconnaissance Office: Director *(Breaking Defense)*

Outgoing National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) Director Chris Scolese stated that artificial intelligence (AI) “explainability” remains a major concern for the agency as it expands the use of AI and machine learning across its intelligence and satellite operations. Speaking at the GEOINT Symposium, Scolese said the NRO is conducting additional research and experimentation to ensure analysts can understand how AI systems arrive at conclusions, particularly when analyzing sensor data from government and commercial satellites in real time. He noted that the agency is increasingly using AI to support spacecraft autonomy, onboard processing, mission planning, tasking and management of its growing proliferated low Earth orbit satellite constellation operated in part through commercial partnerships, including with SpaceX. Scolese said validating AI outputs is more straightforward for satellite design and operational tasks, but more difficult for intelligence analysis and data fusion activities, which require greater insight into the underlying algorithms. He added that the NRO is using its “Ultra-Dense Environment” computing infrastructure to test AI models developed internally and by industry partners, and encouraged additional commercial collaboration to improve validation and testing processes. Scolese also highlighted broader NRO modernization efforts during his tenure, including increased use of commercial capabilities, more resilient and diversified satellite architectures and faster delivery of intelligence products.

## Former NASA Chief of Staff Returns to Lead Agency Launch Operations *(SpaceNews)*

NASA’s former chief of staff Brian Hughes has returned to the agency in a new role overseeing launch operations, a move that raised some concerns on Capitol Hill. As senior director of launch operations, based at the Kennedy Space Center (KSC) in Florida, Hughes will oversee launch operations at KSC and Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. Hughes, who served as chief of staff from May to December 2025, has an extensive political and management background, but little space experience. NASA said that Hughes will work with government and industry officials “to strengthen coordination among stakeholders supporting NASA’s spaceports” and increase launch cadence to support the Trump administration’s national space policy.

## **Federal Agency Space News**

### **Federal Communications Commission**

[FCC Announces Conditional Approval for Certain UAS and Routers](#) (May 6, 2026)

### **National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

[NASA Outlines Preliminary Artemis III Mission Plans](#) (May 13, 2026)

[Station Hums With Advanced Research as Dragon Nears Launch](#) (May 12, 2026)

[NASA’s Next-Gen Space Processor Undergoes Testing](#) (May 12, 2026)

[NASA Names Brian Hughes to Launch Operations Role](#) (May 8, 2026)

[Industry Moon Lander Training Cabin Lands at NASA for Artemis](#) (May 8, 2026)

[NASA Kennedy Center Director Announces Plans to Retire](#) (May 1, 2026)

Office of Space Commerce

[EU Space Act Update](#) (May 12, 2026)

[University Spacecraft Operators Forum - May 27](#) (May 11, 2026)

[OSC Hosts Inaugural Space Workforce Forum](#) (May 8, 2026)

U.S Department of Defense

[Joint Interagency Task Force Enables Standardized Counter-UAS Assessment](#) (May 12, 2026)

[Department of War Releases Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Files](#) (May 8, 2026)

U.S. Space Force

[New Deep Space Radar Capability Employed Early](#) (May 4, 2026)

## International

### Articles & Quotes

[US-China Rivalry Reaches South American Skies](#) (*New York Times*)

The United States and China are increasingly competing over space-related projects in Argentina and Chile, where U.S. officials have pressed local governments to review or halt Chinese astronomy and space infrastructure initiatives over concerns they could support military or satellite-tracking activities. In Argentina, authorities suspended completion of a large Chinese radio telescope project at the Cesco observatory in San Juan Province after U.S. officials raised concerns about potential dual-use applications, leaving key components stalled in customs. U.S. officials reportedly raised similar concerns about a Chinese observatory project in Chile's Atacama Desert, which was later halted by Chilean authorities. The disputes reflect broader geopolitical competition over space infrastructure, scientific cooperation and strategic influence in Latin America, as China continues expanding its regional space partnerships while the Trump administration seeks to counter Beijing's growing presence in the Western Hemisphere.

[US, Close Allies Creating Joint 'Orbital Warfare' Plan: SPACECOM Chief](#) (*Breaking Defense*)

Gen. Stephen Whiting, commander of U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM), stated that the United States and six allied nations participating in the Multinational Force Operation Olympic Defender

(MF-ODD) expect to complete a joint concept of operations (CONOPS) for “orbital warfare” by the end of 2026. The effort is intended to coordinate how the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, United Kingdom and New Zealand would integrate and synchronize capabilities to defend space assets and conduct future space operations. Whiting said the effort builds on recent multinational rendezvous and proximity operations exercises, including Operation Selene, which involved all MF-ODD partners conducting coordinated space domain awareness activities around a “high interest target on orbit.” He also stated that SPACECOM plans to continue quarterly Apollo Insights table-top exercises with commercial industry partners throughout the year, including future exercises focused on dynamic space operations, proliferated constellations and missile warning scenarios. Whiting noted that a recent classified exercise involving more than 60 companies examined potential responses to a nuclear payload detonated in orbit, a scenario the United States has publicly linked to concerns about alleged Russian counterspace developments.

### **Tianzhou-10 Cargo Spacecraft Arrives at Tiangong Space Station** (*SpaceNews*)

China successfully launched the Tianzhou-10 cargo spacecraft to the Tiangong space station on May 10, with the spacecraft docking several hours later to deliver supplies, propellant, scientific payloads and maintenance equipment for current and future crewed missions. The mission included life sciences experiments focused on the effects of microgravity on biological development, as well as technology demonstrations related to solar cells and station operations. Tianzhou-10 also supports upcoming crew rotations following adjustments to China’s recent human spaceflight schedule after suspected debris damage to a previous spacecraft. The launch was China’s 27th orbital launch of 2026, with the country reported to be targeting more than 100 launches across the year.

### **Europe’s 1st Reusable Spacecraft ‘Space Rider’ Clears Key Hurdles on the Road To Launch** (*Space.com*)

The European Space Agency (ESA) announced new milestones for its reusable Space Rider spacecraft as the agency advances toward the vehicle’s first launch later this decade. ESA recently completed thermal protection system testing using plasma wind tunnel simulations to evaluate how the spacecraft withstands reentry temperatures and potential surface damage from debris or micrometeoroids. The agency also finalized assembly of a full-scale drop-test model that will undergo helicopter-guided landing tests in Sardinia later this year to validate the spacecraft’s autonomous parafoil landing system. Space Rider is being developed as an uncrewed reusable orbital laboratory capable of remaining in low Earth orbit for up to two months before returning experiments and cargo to Earth for analysis.

### **Russia, Indonesia Collaborating on Numerous Space Projects** (*Russia’s Pivot to Asia*)

Russia and Indonesia are expanding bilateral space cooperation, including discussions related to astronaut training and future human spaceflight collaboration. Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov stated that the two countries are pursuing several space-related projects and noted that Russia has the experience necessary to support the training and flight preparation of a future Indonesian astronaut. The discussions follow recent meetings between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, during which Indonesian officials raised the possibility of sending Indonesian personnel to participate in Russia’s

cosmonaut program. Indonesian officials characterized the discussions as part of the countries' upgraded strategic partnership and broader efforts to advance Indonesia's national space program, though no formal timeline or astronaut selections have been announced.

### **South Korea Expands Space Partnerships Under New Agency Chief (UPI)**

South Korea is expanding international space cooperation under the leadership of Oh Tae-seok, who has recently engaged with government agencies and private space companies in the United States, Canada, the United Arab Emirates and India. During visits to the United States, Oh attended the Space Symposium in Colorado Springs, met with Jared Isaacman to discuss potential joint projects and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Canadian Space Agency focused on Earth observation, space science and low-Earth orbit satellite communications. South Korean officials also met with commercial space firms regarding satellite launch services and small satellite collaboration, including support for the planned launch of South Korea's next-generation mid-sized satellite later this year. Separately, South Korea hosted a "Korea-India Space Day" event with Indian space officials and companies to discuss future technology cooperation as the country continues efforts to expand its role in the global space industry.

*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)**

### **Spaceport and Launch Assessment Study Help (SPLASH)**

**Department of Defense**

Close Date: May 20, 2026

### **Artemis III Alternate Comm System**

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

Close Date: May 20, 2026

### **RFI - Environmental Satellite Ground Station**

**Department of Defense**

Close Date: June 1, 2026

### **Enabling Exploration Through Partnerships in Advanced Computing**

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

Close Date: June 1, 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)

Near Earth Orbit Network Program's Sounder for Microwave-Based Applications

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: June 1, 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

AbSciCon 2026

AbSciCon

May 17-22, 2026

Space Industry Forum 2026

GSOA and Novaspace

May 19, 2026

2026 ASCEND

AIAA

May 19-21, 2026

SmallSat Europe 2026

SmallSat

May 26-28, 2026

Interagency Astronomy & Astrophysics Advisory Committee (AAAC)

NSF-NASA-DOE

June 1, 2026

2nd Latin American Conference on Space & Society

IAA

June 1-6, 2026

**Space Tech Expo USA**

Space Tech Expo

June 2-4, 2026

**2026 Global Space Conference on Climate Change**

IAF

June 2-4, 2026

**Space Capacity Allocation for the Sustainability of Space Activities Workshop**

Secure World Foundation

June 3-5, 2026

**44th International Space Development Conference**

The National Space Society

June 4-7, 2026

**Space & Satellites USA 2026**

Reuters

June 8-9, 2026

**U.N. Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space**

COPUOS

June 10-19, 2026

**9th Prague Space Security Conference**

Prague Security Studies Institute

June 14-16, 2026

**European Lunar Symposium 2026**

European Lunar Symposium

June 22-26, 2026

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**Questions?**

If you have any questions, please contact:

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