



Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

Good Afternoon!

The entertainment headlines may be all about Spiderman and The Odyssey, but the U.S. space policy headlines over the past two weeks were mostly about Star Wars. The Senate confirmed a new Chief of Space Operations, the Space Forces Association unveiled a simulation to depict space warfare for lawmakers, and the service touted its acquisition transformation.

Outside Washington, China launched three satellites during two launches in late July. The launches, China's 52nd and 53rd of the year, put it on track to surpass 100 launched this year.

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

Akin Spotlight

Akin recently welcomed [Jonathan Markman](#) as senior counsel in its TMT and Space practices. Jon joins the firm from the FCC's Space Bureau, where he led satellite licensing, rulemakings, and initiatives supporting emerging space technologies.

In the White House/Executive Branch

Articles and Quotes

Military Demand Shapes Market for Satellite Propulsion (*SpaceNews*)

An increasingly competitive market is forming around satellite propulsion for dynamic space operations, as startups and established manufacturers invest in systems that give small satellites greater orbital maneuverability. The U.S. Space Force recently disclosed that Parabilis Space Technologies completed fire testing of its Dense Orbital Transfer System (DOTS), a hybrid propulsion module for CubeSats combining solid plastic fuel with a liquid hydrogen peroxide oxidizer, with Space Systems Command later confirming it is being prepared for an orbital demonstration. Other companies are pursuing adjacent segments. Rocket Lab introduced, an integrated Hall-effect system for large constellations, Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers are testing dual mode, chemical extinctic thrusters and Quantum Space is developing

hybrid propulsion for national security missions. The development remains in early stages, with many systems still testing or completing initial production, and the Space Force has not yet translated its interest in dynamic operations into firm requirements or a procurement model.

Space Force Awards Three New Vendors for Sensing, Targeting Tech *(Air & Space Forces Magazine)*

The Space Force announced \$615 million in contracts for three vendors on August 4 to mature space-based sensing and targeting capabilities under the Space-Based Air Moving Target Indicator (SB-AMTI) program. The awards went to Rocket Lab, Systems & Technology Research (STR) and a third firm whose name was withheld due to operational security concerns. Rocket Lab confirmed it received \$397 million of the total contract value to develop and launch its next generation “Flatellite” spacecraft aboard its Neutron rocket, with the flat satellites designed for large constellations featuring space-based sensors and low latency, high-bandwidth communication links. The new awards follow a \$4.2 billion contract to SpaceX in May of 2026 to provide an undisclosed number of AMTI satellites, reflecting the Space Force’s broader effort to diversify its contractor base and maintain competitions across the SB-AMTI architecture. Col. Ryan Frazier, portfolio acquisition executive for space-based targeting and sensing at Space Systems Command, stated that he expects initial capability delivery over the next six to 12 months and “usable” capability in orbit by 2028, adding that the service intends to maintain competition for additional sensors satellites, ground systems and communication systems. Currently, the Space Force’s fiscal year (FY) 2027 budget will request \$7 billion to procure SB-AMTI satellites against adversaries’ anti-access/area-denial systems.

Trump Administration Moves to Spare Space Companies from Environmental Reviews *(Wall Street Journal)*

On July 29, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) released a proposed rule to speed up commercial space licensing for rocket launches, spacecraft re-entries and launch sites by waiving “unnecessary” environmental requirements, with a 30-day comment period now open. The rule would let the FAA exempt “certain commercial space licenses and permits” from 13 federal laws including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act and parts of the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and National Historic Preservation Act, while still requiring that launches not comprise public health, safety or national security rules. The Department of Transportation framed the move as necessary to relieve regulations it says are “slowing American innovation,” amid surging spaceport demand driven by constellations like Starlink and emerging orbital data centers. The proposal builds on two Trump administration executive orders ([E.O. 14335](#) and [E.O. 14369](#)) expanding launch activity and streamlining licensing.

Space Force Outlines Acquisition Wins Amid Ongoing Department Wide Transformation at Air and Space Summit *(SpaceForce.Mil)*

Thomas Ainsworth, acting assistant secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration, outlined the Space Force’s acquisition transformation, centered on nine Portfolio Acquisition Executives who now hold delegated authority over system-level requirements and over 90% of non-restricted contracting authorities. He said the shift favors minimum viable

products to enable faster iteration and commercial innovation, citing the SpaceWerx model as validated by 170 companies securing \$2.8 billion in private capital since February 2024. Over the past six months, the Space Force executed more than 35 contracts totaling \$53 billion in ceiling value, spanning commercial domain awareness trades via RG-XX, missile warning upgrades and the Counter Communications System Meadowlands jammer, SDANet mesh networking, launches of GSSAP 7 and 8 and STP-29A, and operational acceptance of Enhanced Polar System-Recap, the Ground-Based Operational Surveillance System and upgraded Early Warning Radars. Ainsworth concluded that streamlined requirements will help the Service “field competitive and resilient space capabilities to meet evolving national security challenges.”

Federal Agency Space News

Federal Communications Commission

[Carr Thanks Departing Space Bureau Chief as Space Agenda Moves Ahead](#) (August 7, 2026)

[FCC Looks to Expand Direct-to-Direct Satellite Connectivity for Unlicensed Wireless](#) (August 6, 2026)

[FCC to Hold Open Commission Meeting Thursday, August 6, 2026](#) (July 30, 2026)

[FCC Adds Foreign-Produced Power Inverters and Robots to Covered List](#) (July 28, 2026)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

[NASA Joins Artemis III Orion Modules; Rocket Hardware Update](#) (August 5, 2026)

[NASA Opens New Flight Dynamics Research Facility in Virginia](#) (July 31, 2026)

[NASA Astronaut Chris Williams, Crewmates Return from Space Station](#) (July 27, 2026)

Office of Space Commerce

[OSC Leadership Remarks on Milestone Microgravity Commercialization Announcement](#) (August 7, 2026)

[Office of Space Commerce and AIA to Host Commercial Space Supply Chain Forum](#) (July 24, 2026)

[All Systems Go: OSC Moves Out on “Space Commerce Certification”](#) (July 24, 2026)

U.S. Department of War

DoW Enhances C-UAS Marketplace to Expand Access to Validated Technologies (August 3, 2026)

DoW Signs Framework Agreements with Northrop Grumman to Ramp Production of PAC-3, THAAD Components (August 3, 2026)

The Office of Strategic Capital Signs \$820 Million Conditional Loan Commitment with Performance Drone Works to Expand Domestic Drone Component Manufacturing (July 31, 2026)

U.S. Space Force

DAF, Texas Space Commission Establish Strategic Alliance to Accelerate Defense Space Innovation (August 3, 2026)

Space Force Selects Technical Direction Agent for SBI Program (July 31, 2026)

On the Hill

Articles and Quotes

Inside The Effort to Show Congress What War in Space Looks Like (*SpaceNews*)

On July 21, the Space Force Association demonstrated its first integrated National Space Power Center prototype. The unclassified simulation serves as an environment designed to show members of Congress and their staff what military confrontations in orbit look like and how they affect operations on Earth. The prototype was presented to Space Force Chief of Space operations Gen. Chance Saltman and Lt. Gen Douglas Schiess at the Arlington, Virginia, offices of software company Sedaro, where they depicted an adversary spacecraft jamming a U.S. missile-tracking satellite, disrupting data supplied to forces on the ground. The project is explicitly aimed at closing what its organizers describe as a persistent gap in congressional understanding of space operations. The center is financed by the Space Force Association and an industry consortium. The center currently has no permanent location, sustained funding mechanism or formal sponsorship agreement with the Space Force, yet the association is seeking additional industry participants.

Congress Confirms Schiess as Third-Ever Chief of Space Operations (*Defense Scoop*)

The Senate confirmed Lt. Gen. Doug Schiess on August 6 by a unanimous consent vote to serve as the third Chief of Space Operations, following his April nomination by President Donald Trump. Schiess is a career space officer who previously commanded Space Forces-Space, the service's primary operational component to U.S. Space Command, from 2023 to 2025. At his July Senate Armed Services Committee confirmation hearing, Schiess stated, "I will work tirelessly to ensure our Guardians are ready, our capabilities are resilient, our partnerships remain strong, and our

service is worthy of the trust placed in us by the American people.” He inherits a service plan to double its personnel to approximately 20,000 guardians by 2030 and is seeking \$71 billion in FY 2027. Secretary of the Air Force Troy Meink called Schiess “a visionary leader who will ensure the Space Force remains equipped and our guardians remains trained to deter conflict while accelerating the delivery of next-generation capabilities that keep the nation ahead of evolving threats.” Separately, the Senate on Friday also confirmed Erich Hernandez-Baquero as Air Force assistant secretary for space acquisition and integration and Roger Mason as director of the National Reconnaissance Office.

Congressional Advocacy Called Key for Young Space Force *(National Defense Magazine)*

Space Force leaders emphasized that sustained congressional engagement is essential as the service seeks to expand its capabilities, workforce and budget while establishing itself as the Department of War’s (DoW) newest military branch. Speaking at a Mitchell Institute event, Brig. Gen. Nikki Frankino, the Space Force’s legislative liaison, said the service must continually demonstrate its role in enabling joint military operations and securing congressional support for its \$71.1 billion FY 2027 budget request. Officials noted that the Space Force faces unique advocacy challenges, including the inability to publicly showcase many of its space-based capabilities, the highly classified nature of many programs and a relatively small geographic footprint compared to the other military services. They argued that continued investment in space capabilities would provide an outsized return by strengthening the effectiveness of the broader Joint Force, even as the service remains the smallest branch within DoW.

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

Rep. Jefferson Shreve (R-IN) introduced the Global Positioning System (GPS) Modernization Acceleration Act (**H.R. 9980**), which would mandate that the President accelerate the modernization of the GPS by developing and deploying a full constellation of 24 GPS IIIF Satellites and upgrading the ground control segment to improve security and resilience.

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) and Sen. Katie Britt (R-AK) introduced the Space Superiority Readiness Act (**H.R. 5329**), which would improve space control and space superiority readiness.

Rep. Valerie Foushee (D-NC) introduced **H. Res. 1448**, expressing support for the designation of August 1 as “Nation Woman Astronomers Day.”

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

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(August 10, 2026 - August 21, 2026)

On August 4, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) held a closed briefing to examine certain intelligence matters.

On August 5, SSCI held a closed business meeting to consider certain intelligence matters, immediately followed by a closed briefing.

International

Articles & Quotes

Rocket Issue Delays 1st Orbital Rocket Launch from the UK (*Space.com*)

German launch startup Rocket Factory Augsburg (RFA) announced on July 28 that it had identified an unspecified issue with its RFA one rocket during integrated pad testing at the United Kingdom's Saxa Vord Spaceport on the Shetland Islands in Scotland, requiring the vehicle to be de-stacked for further investigation and delaying what would have been the first ever vertical orbital launch from British soil. The company, which had previously targeted an August launch window, did not disclose a revised date. The deal comes as the U.K. and broader European space sector seek to establish sovereign launch capacity independent of the European Space Agency's existing site of Kourou, French Guiana, and amid rising global demand for launch services driven by satellite constellation deployments, planned orbital data centers and increasing U.S. Department of Defense requirements for expansive space launch. RFA Chief Commercial Officer Jorn Spurmann, in a statement issued when the company obtained its initial launch license, called the effort "a powerful endorsement of our technical excellence and a turning point for European space innovation."

Kreios Taps Kongsberg NanoAvionics for 2028 VLEO Demo (*Payload Space*)

Spanish startup Kreios Space announced on August 4 that it has selected Norway-based Kongsberg NanoAvionics to supply the satellite bus for its first in-orbit demonstration of air-breathing electric propulsion (ABEP) technology in very low Earth orbit (VLEO), with the launch targeted for 2028. The cross-border procurement arrangement between a Spanish developer and Norwegian bus manufacturer demonstrates the increasing multinational character of VLEO market entries, raising potential consideration around European Union and European Economic Area export licensing, technology transfer frameworks and dual use regulatory companies as ABEP systems move from development toward commercial deployment. The mission will also carry up to two undisclosed payloads, the nature of which would implicate additional payload licensing and end user requirements depending on the launch jurisdiction and customer base.

China Launches Secretive TJS-27 Pair, Orbits Next-Gen Tianlian Relay Sat (*SpaceNews*)

China conducted two space launches on July 29, advancing dual-use capabilities with clear intelligence and military applications. A Long March 6A rocket deployed the TJS-27A and TJS-27B satellites from Taiyuan, which the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation

described only as communication and data transmission test platforms. The U.S. Space Force tracked the pair in 1,153-kilometer orbits. Hours earlier, China also launched the Tianlian-3 (01) relay satellite from Wenchang, inaugurating a third-generation system analogous to the U.S. Tracking and Data Relay Satellites to support the Tiangong space station and crewed missions. The two launches were China's 52nd and 53rd of 2026, putting the country on pace to surpass 100 orbital launches in a single year.

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)

Future GEOINT Analytic Technologies

National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Close Date: August 10, 2026

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

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: August 10, 2026

Drone Targets

Department of the Air Force

Close Date: August 12, 2026

Unified Network and Navigation Operations (UNNO)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: August 15, 2026

Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory (NBL) Facility Commercial Utilization

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: September 30, 2026

System Delta 84 (SYD 84/MT) Medium Earth Orbit Missile Warning / Missile Tracking Epoch 3 and Epoch 4

Department of Defense

Close Date: October 31, 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

Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture (PWSA) Systems, Technologies, and Emerging Capabilities (STEC) Broad Agency Announcement

Space Development Agency

Close Date: March 3, 2027

Space-to-Space (S2S) Communication Broad Agency Announcement (BAA)

Department of Defense

Close Date: September 29, 2030

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

2026 Callyo Renewal

Drug Enforcement Administration

Close Date: August 19, 2026

Geostationary Littoral Imaging and Monitoring Radiometer (GLIMR) Access to Space (ATS) “GLIMR ATS”

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: September 4, 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)

Unleashing Unlicensed Spectrum for Direct-to-Device

Federal Communications Commission (August 7, 2026)

Upcoming Space Events

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

Global Summit on Space Sciences and Aerospace Engineering

Space Science Research

August 26-27, 2026

Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel (ASAP)

NASA

August 31, 2026

Outer Space Security Conference 2026

UNIDIR

September 8-9, 2026

2026 Air, Space & Cyber Conference

AFA

September 14-16, 2026

Glenn Space Technology Symposium

American Astronautical Society

September 15-16, 2026

2026 World Space Business Week

Novaspace

September 14-17, 2026

2026 Texas Space Summit

Texas Space Summit

September 21-23, 2026

Aerospace Innovation Forum: A Golden Age of Aerospace and Defense

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

September 23, 2026

Off World Summit

Payload Space

September 23-24, 2026

Learn more about our Space Law and Policy practice.

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