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## Standup of the Joint Interagency Comined Space Operations Center

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**Joint Interagency Combined Space Operations Center**

**Stephen K. Hunter**

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## **Overview**

During a June 23, 2015 speech at the Geospatial Intelligence Conference, Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work announced the development of a Joint Interagency Combined Space Operations Center (JICSpOC). The Department of Defense, United States Strategic Command, Air Force Space Command, and the U.S. Intelligence Community are working to establish the JICSpOC at Schriever Air Force Base by October 2015 and begin experimentation and testing. The results of these experiments and tests will be incorporated into standard operating procedures by January 1, 2017. During this period this combined team will work through innovative approaches to space operations, to include a Joint Space Operations Center back-up, to ensure the US can respond in an integrated and coordinated fashion to emerging threats which Congress addressed in recent legislation regarding developing capabilities of Russia, China and other foreign entities. The JICSpOC is intended to ensure unity of effort across the gamut of space capabilities critical to U.S. interests. The space enterprise includes a diverse mix of capabilities, including commercial capabilities, which must be addressed to achieve the necessary unity of effort and assurance that vital space capabilities continue to be available in support of national security and the interests of the U.S., its allies and partners.<sup>i</sup>

## **What is a JICSpOC?**

The JICSpOC is a group of around 30 individuals who will be working in existing facilities at Schriever Air Force Base just outside of Colorado Springs, Colorado. Initially they will be experimenting and testing ideas, concepts, and procedures in an attempt to quickly establish an operational organization that provides timely responses to threats to U.S. national security interests related to space. The JSpOC is a Command and Control weapon system focused on planning and executing the U.S. Strategic Command's Joint Functional Component Command for Space (JFCC Space) mission. This mission includes surveillance of space, protection of U.S. and friendly space systems, prevention of an adversary's ability to use space systems and services for purposes hostile to U.S. national security interests, and direct support to battle management, command, control, communications and intelligence.<sup>ii</sup>

As the JICSpOC matures the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community will determine best use of the personnel and capabilities. This process will help to clarify the long-standing concerns over how best to respond to an adversary's actions against U.S. space capabilities.

## **Why is the JICSpOC being developed so quickly?**

"Since an attack on our most sophisticated spy satellite would almost certainly be among the first sign of war it is crucial that any response be coordinated between the military and the Intelligence Community."<sup>iii</sup>

The Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community recognized a need to work together to address the increasing threats to the U.S. national security space enterprise, and a need to better integrate space operations in response to these threats. The JICSpOC will be the focal point for operational experimentation and tests that will lead to better unity of effort for these diverse space communities and will enhance resiliency. The national security need is immediate because the space environment is already a competitive, congested and contested environment with potential adversaries rapidly developing capabilities to deny the U.S. and its allies' use of space during a conflict.<sup>iv</sup>

Lt Gen Raymond testified in before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces in March of 2015 that "Both [China and Russia] have acknowledged they are developing – or have developed counter-space capabilities. Both have demonstrated the ability to perform complex maneuvers in space and both have 'directed energy' capabilities that could be used to track or temporarily blind satellites."<sup>v</sup> In addition to the threats being discussed, in February 2015, the Air Force began construction of the Space Fence on the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. The contract also includes an option for a second site in Western Australia. When these sites become operational in 2018, the JSpOC will jump from the tens of thousands of objects it can track today, to hundreds of thousands of objects.<sup>vi</sup> Development of tactics, techniques and procedures for dealing with this increased body of data is critical to maintaining safe operations in the space domain as well as continuing to provide the same level of support to U.S. national security interests.

### **How does the JICSpOC relate to Space Traffic Management?**

As expressed in the Head Quarters Air Force JICSpOC Public Affairs Guidance the intent of the JICSpOC is to ensure unity of effort across the gamut of space capabilities critical to U.S. interests<sup>vii</sup>. The U.S. National Space Policy signed in 2010 states that "The United States considers the sustainability, stability, and free access to, and use of, space vital to its national interests."<sup>viii</sup> In addition to the Department of Defense mission, the JSpOC currently provides Space Situational Awareness information to non-Department of Defense Satellite Owner Operators through agreements established with U.S. Strategic Command<sup>ix</sup> primarily because the U.S. government comprehends the need for providing this critical information in order to ensure the space domain remains available for future uses. The JICSpOC concept does not currently support moving this responsibility from the JSpOC. However, as stated above, the JICSpOC team will address the space enterprise in its entirety as it relates to U.S. national interests.

### **In Closing**

In a financially austere environment the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community are building a new capability to address realistic emerging threats against U.S. space assets. When considering recent comments by high-ranking Department of Defense leaders and likely near-term increases in workload for the JSpOC, the rapid stand-up of the JICSpOC is understandable. Over the next year highly skilled personnel will focus their intellect and innovation on how best to share responsibilities for sustaining the space domain in all

environments while helping to sustain the space environment and U.S. National Security interests.

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<sup>i</sup> All information in this paragraph is derived from the Joint Interagency Combined Space Operations Center Public Affairs Guidance dated September 9, 2015

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Strategic Command, USSTRATCOM Space Control and Space Surveillance, January, 2014, [https://www.stratcom.mil/factsheets/11/Space\\_Control\\_and\\_Space\\_Surveillance/](https://www.stratcom.mil/factsheets/11/Space_Control_and_Space_Surveillance/), accessed September 20, 2015

<sup>iii</sup> Clark, Colin, "Would Spies Command In a Space War? Dunford Says Maybe", Breakingdefense .com, July 22, 2015, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/07/would-spies-command-in-a-space-war-dunford-says-maybe/>, accessed September 1, 2015

<sup>iv</sup> All information in this paragraph is derived from the Joint Interagency Combined Space Operations Center Public Affairs Guidance dated September 9, 2015

<sup>v</sup> House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, Statement of Lieutenant General John W. Raymond Commander JFCC Space Before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces on FY16 National Defense authorization Budget Request for Space Programs, 25 March 2015

<sup>vi</sup> Quick, Daren, "Construction Begins on Space Fence Radar System", Gizmag, 24 March 2015, <http://www.gizmag.com/space-fence-radar-construction-begins/36703/>, accessed September 9, 2015

<sup>vii</sup> Joint Interagency Combined Space Operations Center Public Affairs Guidance, September 9, 2015

<sup>viii</sup> United States, White House, United States National Space Policy, June 28, 2010

<sup>ix</sup> House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, Statement of Lieutenant General John W. Raymond Commander JFCC Space Before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces on FY16 National Defense authorization Budget Request for Space Programs, 25 March 2015