

Aerospace Advantage Ep. 219 – Advice for President Trump’s Team: Spacepower Perspectives – Transcript (AI-Assisted)

Doug Birkey: [00:00:00] Welcome to the Aerospace Advantage podcast, brought to you by PenFed. I'm Doug Birkey, Executive Director at the Mitchell Institute. Here on the Aerospace Advantage, we speak with leaders in the DoD, industry, and other subject matter experts to explore the intersection of strategy, operational concepts, technology, and policy when it comes to air and space power.

Now, this week, we're going to focus on key considerations President Trump's defense team, especially the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Air Force, should be thinking about when it comes to space power. Now, we all know that President Trump created the Space Force in his first term. It's just been about over five years since that key decision, and a lot has happened since then.

In the next few years, they are going to be especially impactful when it comes to space power. To put it bluntly, every facet of America's national security requires space. We need to recognize the challenges and opportunities facing Guardians and work to strengthen the hand we're empowering them to play.

Services are not built overnight, [00:01:00] and we're playing the long game here, but every step matters. So with that, I'm excited to have General Kevin Chilton, the Explorer Chair of the Mitchell Institute's Space Power Advantage Center of Excellence, General Dave Deptula, Dean of the Mitchell Institute, plus Charles Galbreath and Jen Reeves of our Space Power Advantage Center of Excellence join me for this conversation.

Welcome, everybody.

Gen. Kevin Chilton, USAF (Ret.): Thanks, Doug. Great to be with you today.

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): Always a pleasure to discuss these critical issues.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: Absolutely. Excited to be here. Thanks.

Charles Galbreath: Thanks, Doug. Looking forward to it.

Doug Birkey: No, it's a great group. So, I just want to kick this off with a few scene setting questions up front that are going to help lay out some of the considerations for really everything else we discuss.

And you can't get away from this. I mean, this dominates everything and it's really first and foremost, space is now a contested domain. Guys, what are the main implications of this development when it comes to stewarding effective U. S. space power?

Charles Galbreath: So, Doug, let me jump in on that one. Basically, it means that what we had isn't what we need going [00:02:00] forward. And that's not just from a material perspective, but also from an operational concept perspective and from a training perspective. Everything that we had was geared towards space as a non contested domain. People like to use the word benign. I've never thought that space was a benign environment. There's radiation and all that other stuff, but bottom line, there are now threats that we must counter, and that requires changes to our concepts of operation, to what we're acquiring, the way we handle, every aspect of military operations.

It also means that the space services and effects that we had previously delivered, those need to continue, but we have to do so after we gain and maintain space superiority. That's gotta be mission number one, because if we don't do that, everything else doesn't come.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: Yeah, I think I'd love to pile onto that. I, I look at things, in a very similar vein, but there are some, concepts that I like to think about when we're talking about how space has changed from when we originally, [00:03:00] uh, became a spacefaring nation and, you know, further used space more and more. How should we be looking at it today?

Well, here's the first and most important thing. There is no longer a day without space, right? Space is so ingrained in what it is that we do, not only in the military and the government, but also in our everyday lives. I mean, everybody with a phone in their pocket is using space every day. So we, we absolutely have to think about that first and foremost.

There is no day without space. We can't live without space any longer and when you think about that then, space is actually unique in some ways. It's a very different environment up there, but also as we move forward in our war fighting constructs, we have to remember that space needs to be treated like other warfighting domains. Right?

And that's kind of a new thing. We haven't really done this and I think this is a battle that we're fighting now. And we just have to, right? There's lots of changes that we have to do when we get out there and I know we're going to talk about all that.

Doug Birkey: Now I think that's where General Saltzman really nails it when he talks [00:04:00] about moving from merchant marine model towards a combat navy model.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: Absolutely.

Gen. Kevin Chilton, USAF (Ret.): I pile on to just exactly what Charles and Jen just said. Look, before when it was Air Force Space Command, and before we were even allowed to speak about threats to our resources in space, or the notion of space superiority, we just had people who operated our satellites on orbit, and they were operated in a benign environment.

So, they didn't have to worry about defense. They just had to worry about making sure that they had good contact with the satellites and the satellites were healthy in that environment. Now we, we need to be able to gain and maintain space superiority in this domain, which means we need offensive squadrons and deltas.

We need defensive ones and they can be combined into one and our operators need to be trained to understand when they're under attack, when they're not under attack, what's a natural environment affecting them, et cetera. It's a whole new paradigm [00:05:00] and it's as Jen said, it's no different than any other service. And to think that the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marines would operate without these capabilities would be foolish.

And then you pile on top of that, the ability to command and control that at the operational level of war. No longer do you just have a colonel liaison with a small staff at the joint force air component command. They need to be a separate component command, and they need to be led by a general officer.

And they need to have a planning staff and an execution staff that can write orders in support of regional combatant commands. This requires more people. And U. S. Space Command, a new command needs to be manned up with people who understand offense, defense, and operations. I think the entire force is poorly resourced at this point, and if we're going to be competitive and meet the charter of being able to gain and maintain superiority, and of course, if you

have that position deter attacks [00:06:00] on our forces, we need to start growing.

Doug Birkey: Now, I really appreciate those responses and a lot to consider there, but again, it's foundational. Nothing makes sense unless people absorb that. So, you know, given that background, what are some of the key factors the incoming defense team and especially the Secretary of the Air Force should always bring into the decision equation when looking to effectively lead the Space Force?

I mean, space is a contested domain. These realities, they just affect everything.

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): Yeah, Doug, let me kick this one off and share with you in the audience, I, last week just delivered a presentation on the state of the Air Force and the state of the Space Force up at a aerospace and conference in New York City. And I want to kind of hit the high points. In what the new Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Department of the Air Force are going to need to understand is there are three critical [00:07:00] areas where they need to act to assure that the Space Force gets the requirements that it needs to execute the nation's defense strategy.

And here you go. Three principle points. Chili already mentioned one of them, the U. S. Space Force is underfunded, the U. S. Space Force is undersized, and the U. S. Space Force does not have the authorities yet to consolidate the plethora of DoD space agencies that are out there. Let me expand just a bit. And by the way, you know, what my compatriots here in the panel already discussed was the impact that space has on the average citizen and this is what makes the Space Force very different than any of the other services, because unknowingly every not just U. [00:08:00] S. citizen, but person on the face of the planet of the earth relies on what the U. S. Space Force provides. Yet they don't realize that.

At the same time, coming back to the U. S., the U. S. Space Force is only about 3.5 percent of the entire U. S. Department of Defense budget. It's simply cannot perform it's functions to deter or to defeat, defeat threats in space without more funding, period. That's number one.

The second one is personnel. To put this size in context, the Space Force is about half the size of the Coast Guard, yet space expertise is required to support the Space Force, Space Command, as well as the individual services, unique space requirements. And don't forget those Department of Defense agencies out there, like the [00:09:00] National Reconnaissance Office, where there was just

an article yesterday about they want the Space Force to provide their personnel requirements. And by the way, there's an easy fix to that. National Reconnaissance Office should be direct report to the U. S. Space Force, it should be part of the Space Force, but I'll save that for a later question.

And then number three, the organizational authorities. Look, part of the rationale, a fundamental part of the rationale for the stand up of the Space Force, was made by a previous vice president who stated that our national security space program spread across more than 60 departments and agencies that results in a glaring lack of leadership and accountability, and that undermines our combatant commanders and puts our warfighters at risk.

And to date, after five years of existence, only one of those 60 agencies has been integrated into the Space [00:10:00] Force, and that's the Space Development Agency. So, that's what the new Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Department of the Air Force, needs to understand and act upon quickly at the front end of their new administration.

Gen. Kevin Chilton, USAF (Ret.): Hey, Dave, if I could pile onto that, just briefly. They, I, I agree. This needs to be quick. We don't need a two year AOA. We need a quick review of what's happened over the past four years and what has not happened. I think the, um, Trump, first Trump administration started us down a good path, following the end of the Obama administration, where we finally recognize the need for space superiority. But they need to do a quick look at what has and has not been done over the last 4 years and I think that will motivate them to accelerate every, every point you just made on manning and resourcing.

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): Yeah, no, thanks for that [00:11:00] Chili. I'll just remind the audience with respect to the FY 2025 budget, the Space Force, the actual budget impact is about a 5 to 6 percent budget cut. And when you consider inflation. And so we need to reintroduce transparency into budgeting so that the American people and Congress understand what's really going on with the Space Force.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: So, sir, I have another thing to offer. I know that's a huge order right there that is so wildly important and certainly at the level of the Secretary. But I have something to add to the conversation from my perspective back in the foxhole, if you will, from when I was an active duty space operator. And one of the things that we actually ran up against when we were trying to get after the notion of space superiority.

And granted, these were in times that are not today, right? [00:12:00] And today it's especially vital. But we were still already thinking about this. And that is, there is not. Policy out there to allow us the military and whatever service it happens to be today. It's the Space Force to actually prosecute the operations in the domain to gain and maintain space superiority in light of whatever threats are being presented to us.

Again, in the domain, there's not good policy out there to allow us to do what it takes. And so, so this is something from an operator's perspective where we would get stopped from doing or planning at least what we thought needed to be done because the policy disallowed. And so, um, I offer that as something else to consider.

We can't get after space superiority, because we don't have the authorities to do so in the domain.

Doug Birkey: And that's huge.

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): I think Jen, you raise [00:13:00] a real good point. This is, you know, you may be dancing around it, but this, when you talk about policy, it's politics. The previous or until Monday, the current administration in prohibiting any kind of development or building or prosecution of weapon programs that were designed to achieve space superiority.

And you're right. That is a policy piece. It needs to be changed, uh, immediately, like, not later than the end of next week.

Doug Birkey: No, and a huge piece of that, Jen, is you can't have effective deterrence, and we see this all the time with cyber actions. You know, what was the, the result for, for the salt typhoon thing?

Well, nobody really knows. I mean, it's pretty consequential from what I can tell, and yet we don't have a clear cut set of consequences that adversaries understand. And so, yeah. Thousand percent what you're saying.

Charles Galbreath: I think it's even it's even worse than that because what we're hearing from Space Force intelligence officers is China [00:14:00] is lazing our satellites on a regular basis. They are jamming our satellites on a regular basis and we're allowing this to happen? We cannot allow that to be the status quo so that that's the acceptable level of of engagement between nations. We need to be holding China and anybody else that threatens our space

capabilities and and attacks them appropriately. I mean, these would be acts of war if those were crewed spacecraft.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: Absolutely.

Doug Birkey: So, another factor we're seeing right now, you know, I got it. Space, contested domain, very, very important effects. But demand is surging here on Earth. I mean, every single service, the agencies, you name it. Every terrestrial actor wants more from space, and it's leading to, uh, you know, a step function change in demand.

And we've talked about resource challenges and all that. Could you please walk us through what those realities mean for the Space Force and how they posture for the next several years?

Charles Galbreath: You know, I, I think Jen hit it on the head when she said there, there is [00:15:00] no longer a day without space. Space is integral in every military operation that we conduct and whether people in the United States or around the world know it, it's integral to, to their daily lives. That's absolutely going to continue. As more space companies provide services and capabilities and effects. That's just going to continue to grow I mean we saw the use of Maxar provided imagery during the opening stages of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. That type of capability and that type of understanding that is provided by space capabilities, it's just going to continue to grow. And it just puts an incredibly high importance on preserving those capabilities. And again, it goes back to space superiority because we're relying on them, whether we know it or not. And if you try to have a day without space, it's not a good day.

Doug Birkey: So, another factor that is in play right here is, is a notion of fighting tonight. And obviously we talked about we're, we're trying to, uh, change the [00:16:00] tires on the car while we're going down the highway here, given what's in play.

But there are also longer term facets that we're, we're trying to deal with. I mean, Charles, you just released the paper last year on cislunar space. It's crucially important and that's a marathon. It's not a sprint to get there. And how do we go about balancing these, these near term priorities and the longer term priorities.

Both are crucial. We're stretched thin. How do you look at that?

Charles Galbreath: Yeah, I think it's important to remember three factors when you're talking about balancing the fight tonight versus the fight that might be tomorrow night or next week. The first is if you want to be able to fight next week, there might be capabilities that you have to start building today.

Some of these are just long lead, they take a while to develop, and they take a while for the Guardians to wrap their heads around and develop the tactics, techniques, and procedures to employ them effectively. Secondly, if we don't want to have that fight next week, taking action today might actually help shape the environment so that we can create conditions where we do not escalate to hostilities, or if we [00:17:00] do, they're on more advantageous terms for us.

And then finally, I'm a big advocate of the old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. And so if we can take steps to start developing capabilities that do that shaping, that will help us win in the future, taking those, you know, small steps now could avoid the need to have a huge catch up at the end here in, you know, in a few years.

And so those three concepts, I think, are important for decision makers, the new secretary of the Air Force, the new defense team, to consider. Yes, we absolutely have to prepare for tonight because you don't get to next week if you don't get through today, but you don't want to lose tomorrow's fight by focusing too much on the, on the fight today.

Doug Birkey: You know, we're talking about a lot of challenges here, and how do we get to solutions? What should the Secretary of Defense, the, you know, Secretary of the Air Force, what should they be pitching forward? Does it come down to more resources? I mean, you know, we constantly hear from Guardians that they're peddling as fast as they can, trying to take care of the essentials.

How do [00:18:00] we help them?

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): I'm going to go back and hit on the 3 things I did before. In the first one is, yeah, you do need more resources and part of that resource isn't just dollars, it's also people. And it's not just people. It's also doing the best with what you have by consolidating many of the space agencies.

The most critical ones that are out there, the National Reconnaissance Office, National Geospatial Agency, and the Missile Defense Agency. You know, there is enormous redundancy, duplication, and a lot of that could be done away with if we consolidated these agencies into the Space Force, as well as waste.

So, yeah, you immediately get rid of the NRO's people problem if the NRO becomes part of the Space Force. Uh, that way you can allocate resources based on where the critical needs are. Now, look, no, one's [00:19:00] ever going to get 100 percent of what the requirement is. We understand that, but that's further rationale to consolidate and also achieve unity of effort.

Now, you know, Charles can wax on this eloquently and Jen, because they wrote a paper on it. But we're also going to have to get realistic. All right? There's been too much going along to get along and not bringing these critical issues to the table to discuss them in an adult fashion. And what I'm specifically talking about is the United States Army encroach and other services encroaching on Space Force prerogatives. Why is the United States Army building a communication space constellation for their own organic use? That, that is the opposite of what jointness is all about. Um, and they're not just doing it in [00:20:00] space. They're doing it with air, with building precision, hypersonic, long range weapon systems.

They're doing it with combatant commanders by building their own multi domain task forces. Hey, that's the realm of combatant commands. I digress, but let me move back to space. Part of this is more resources. I gave you the number, about three and a half percent of the entire DOD budget, but guess what? A hundred percent of the Department of Defense's Combat efforts halt if the Space Force doesn't have sufficient funding and resources put together the communications, the precision navigation and timing that are absolutely required for the rest of the United States military to operate.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: So, sir, I could not agree more with what you're talking about there. I'm going to pile on with another from the foxhole perspective, if you will, having [00:21:00] been a space operator for years and years. And one of the things I think that's most, it's a little, it's a little more tactical, perhaps operational in nature, but it's also an interesting thing that it's, cultural in nature.

And we even heard about it from, um, the retired general officer who was, part of the test when we were doing the ASAT tests back in, um, back in 1985 and launching an ASAT off of an F 15. And here's the issue. This cultural issue, is that we're used to space only being a provider of support and that has to change in the future.

So, not only do we need the resources, do we need some alignment of organizations much better, but what we're going to have to do is in sort of the hearts and minds of the warfighters, they're going to have to understand and get

used to it and be okay with the fact that there are probably going to be offensive and certainly defense operations that are happening in the [00:22:00] space domain.

And guess what? That ground pounder might have to do something to support that. Not the other way around. And I think it's a really interesting, it's just an interesting thing to think about because certainly in my career, having been a space guy and been in a lot of joint environments with lots of, um, members who are warfighters, but me too, but from various services, no one ever thought that we were fighting wars in space.

No one ever thought that that would be a thing. And, and it's going to be a thing if it's not already a thing. And people are going to have to get used to being in support of operations happening in space. And, uh, that's gonna take a change in hearts and minds. And we need to start talking about it.

Doug Birkey: Now to that point, I mean the best way to deal with an ASAT might be a B 21 going against a launch site somewhere around the world.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: Exactly.

Doug Birkey: Yep.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: Exactly. Counterspace operations right there.

Doug Birkey: So, the scale of Space Force, I mean, we've danced around this a little bit, but I want to hit it [00:23:00] direct. When the service was created, a lot of people argued that Space Force could operate within the general personnel top line.

It was bringing over from the Air Force and, you know, different additive factors from the other services. But we know Guardians at all levels are spread thin, given what we're asking them to do. Do we need to look at growing the Space Force in a deliberate fashion?

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): Yes! Absolutely yes. Okay, this notion, which is a very immature one, that we're going to be able to do everything we need to do without adding any overhead is just that. It's immature and unrealistic in the context of, okay, you want a separate service for space?

Then they need to have sufficient personnel to be able to engage in the multitude of decision making bodies that are resident inside the Department of

Defense. And right now [00:24:00] today, they don't have those numbers. They're already double and triple hatted in many of the positions that they hold. In a lot of the places where decisions are made, in meetings at the Office of the Secretary of Defense level, or at the top of the Joint Chiefs of Staff level, they need representation. Well, today, they don't have sufficient numbers of personnel to be able to do that. So, that is one of the issues that has to be addressed front on and right up front. And transparently.

Gen. Kevin Chilton, USAF (Ret.): Dave, I agree completely. In fact, I would argue triple cause we've multiplied by three. The number of missions they had back before we called this a warfighting domain at the operational level and there at the tactical level.

So, at the squadron level, we got three times as much requirements for what they do at that level, at the operational level of war in the planning and execution as a component [00:25:00] command and at the COCOMs. And then you need 3 times the amount up and, in the Pentagon, where we didn't have this kind of representation.

So, they can be involved in every aspect of from organized training and equipping the force for going forward. And then add to that U. S. Space commands, the combatant commands needs., It's far broader than it was, even 10 years ago.

Doug Birkey: So I want to pull the thread here a little bit more directly and everybody was kind of touching upon it a little bit, but specifically the senior leader bench.

All the time we hear comparisons that, well, the army has this many general officers. So, the air force and the space force, they should have this. And I think people really miss a key element here. And that has to do with, with the responsibilities and the authorities. We're not talking about just trying to 18 year olds and under supervision at a given time.

And can you guys expand upon that? I mean, this is really, really crucial, especially for the Hill to understand.

Charles Galbreath: So, the [00:26:00] traditional mindset is you determine how many senior leaders you need based off of how many junior followers you have underneath you and that that's a very simplistic way of thinking of things and and you're absolutely right.

I think we have to look beyond that and talk about the effects that those leaders are having in the organizations and the systems and the people that they lead because GPS for example. There's a squadron commander responsible for, the maintenance and the continued signal propagation of the GPS system. That affects the entire world, right?

That's run by an O5. I'm not saying that that O5 needs to be a general officer but we have to look at what sort of impact our leaders are going to have. And it ends up inverting some of that pyramid that we traditionally think of where you have to have 1000 E1s in order to have, right general officer level.

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): Hey, Charles, let me jump in there first [00:27:00] for our audience and O5 is a lieutenant colonel. Um, so that's a, that's a mid grade officer. Sort of the top of the mid grade officers, but uh, mid grade officer and in, um, I, I just want to. Again, it's one of those things that you won't hear in the Pentagon because no one wants to upset anybody else.

But this, what Charles is describing is most of the Department of Defense personnel management is based on an anachronistic construct of military warfare and effects. And what he's describing is, the Space Force is successful because of brains, not brawn. Okay? And so it needs to be resourced very differently than as Doug slightly alluded [00:28:00] to it, not just a bunch of 18 year olds you got out there being supervised by an adult, but what are the consequences and effects of the actions that need to be put in place to defend our own assets as well as deter, and if necessary, conduct offensive operations in space to take out our adversaries capabilities. That has nothing to do with absolute numbers of, uh, you know, very young people hauling around a rifle that can shoot one bullet at a time.

Charles Galbreath: And if I could tag team back in on this one, um, that isn't just the operational and what's happening sort of in the field. It trickles up into what we have in the Pentagon. We purposely designed the Space Force staff, in the Pentagon to be very small. And we're realizing and we put, well we saw right away, we couldn't cover down on all of the meetings that happened in the joint community, uh, to bring forward space force [00:29:00] equities with the right level of rank.

We were sending, I can't tell you how many meetings I went to as an O6 representing the service at a three star level forum, right? So, we have to get past the, as you put it, General Deptula, the anachronistic view of Personnel management and look at effects and allow the space for staff to grow to an

appropriate level so that it can represent itself and its equities to the joint community more forcefully than we can do today.

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): It's not just more forcefully, it's effectively.

Doug Birkey: So, switching gears a little bit here, given all these new realities we're talking about, what does it mean to train Guardians?

I mean, military spacepower is no longer just about providing support services. We've hit that really hard today. And what we're talking about now are warfighters in very dynamic, complex environments, handling offensive and defensive, very technically complex capabilities. [00:30:00] What does that mean for training?

Charles Galbreath: You know, General Chilton hit on this earlier when he was talking about some of the ramifications of space as a warfighting domain and how when we experience an anomaly in one of our satellites, we don't just think that it's a natural event. We, we now need to think that it might be a, an attack that's occurring.

And so we have to create a realistic training environment for all of our Guardian operators so that they can exercise against a variety of threats and scenarios because there's a lot of challenges out there, facing the Space Force and the missions that they execute. It's not just the radiation or micrometeorites now, it's lasers, it's co orbital assets, it's jamming, it's potentially nukes in space.

We've got to prepare our guardians for all of those eventualities so that they can confront them and prevail.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: Well, and not just that, but think about when, when we were young space operators, right? The threat was the environment. That [00:31:00] was the threat. And now there are so many other threats that we have to be familiar with.

It's not just about understanding what's happening in space, but it's also very clearly understanding about intent and foreign policy and what these other actors, these other countries, what they want to do and how they want to hold us at risk in space. And that has, you know, until recently, not necessarily been part of how we do operations.

Now, our flying friends, they totally get that. Because they've been dealing in threat environments created by adversaries as, as long as flying has happened, but that's not how it originated with space. And so this is, this is a new thing and we really have to take it seriously. And frankly, we have not stepped up.

It took the United States a long time to recognize that space is a warfighting domain. I mean, that first offensive action was in 2007 when the Chinese blew up their own satellite to demonstrate that they could do it. It was a very, groundbreaking [00:32:00] and negative moment, but it took us 12 years to sort of recognize the implications of that and stand up a combatant command. As well as a service to focus solely on what is happening in space.

Charles Galbreath: Yeah, we hit the snooze button for 12 years.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: We really did.

Gen. Kevin Chilton, USAF (Ret.): So if I could pile on Doug to the training piece, it's frustrating when you have a integrated exercise or war game and space is what we'd say white carded in. In other words, they really can't plug in and exercise and train and war game because they don't have the tools to do that.

Um, and so they need to have good simulators. Both at the tactical level. So, that's at the squadron level when they can, so they can do some of the things that Jen just talked about. Practice how you're going to respond when you're attacked, if you're operating GPS, for example, but also practice how you're going to attack if you're in an offensive squadron or [00:33:00] how you're going to defend, if you're have the capability to defend. They need training ranges.

You know, you can't just do everything through simulation. For COCOM to believe something's going to work, they've got to see that it's been demonstrated to some level. And so they need to be able to train with actual hardware that they're going to use or hardware similar to exactly what they're going to use.

And I think we often forget about the operational level of war. Command and control, planning, execution. Those who will give orders to the squadron level to execute either offensive or defensive operations or adjust constellations. And those folks in that in the C SpOC, the space operations centers, they need to have a simulator where they can practice that.

We do that all the time in the air domain. We have practice air operations control centers where we exercise, we try new tactics, techniques and procedures. [00:34:00] None of that exists today, and it needs to be funded.

Doug Birkey: So, sir, building on that, how do we tie in the joint and the allied counterparts piece? I mean, because you're hitting really key points here, and space is integrated into everything.

Gen. Kevin Chilton, USAF (Ret.): Well, I, you know, we have some great allies with some great capabilities. In the space domain, and just as we went from just an air operation center, to a joint force air component command center to a combined air component command center, where we started to integrate, our allies into the planning for air operations.

And no one can speak better about this than Dave. When you do the same thing in space, because we will, we need to fight with our allies, we'll need to fight as a coalition in this domain, just as we do in every other domain.

Doug Birkey: So, moving on here a little bit, what about the Space Force's identity? we've talked a lot about it today. Guardians, they are warfighters, but I'm not sure everybody else [00:35:00] gets that. Do you guys mind sharing your thoughts on, on how this needs to evolve both internally and externally? I mean, if you go down the street of Main Street, USA, and you ask somebody what a Marine is, I think they'll tell you some pretty constant themes, but what do we want people to say when, when they're asked about what a Guardian is? Both within the service and outside?

Charles Galbreath: Yeah, that's a, that's a great question, Doug. The Guardian identity is, is absolutely critical. And, and you're right, Guardians are warfighters. I wrote a piece last year advocating for that exact point. But what people need to understand is it's a different type of fight. Warfare is constantly evolving, and what a warrior was a, what a warfighter was a hundred years ago is very different than what a warfighter is today.

And we have to recognize that space is that front line of warfighting in the 21st century. And we have to prepare Guardians that understand that, that understand those threats, that understand the environment and the different [00:36:00] physics that are associated with it so that they can achieve superiority and the effects necessary to win a war in that domain.

And so, just, I've got to remind people that warfighting is constantly evolving. Guardians are the warfighters of the 21st century.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: So, I'm with you. A clear narrative is super, super important. What I do want to say though is I sympathize how hard this can be because the space environment is one that is not one that can be experienced in a visceral way the way, you know, you know, being at sea or being on the land or being in the air.

And so I sympathize that it's hard to come up with that narrative and be succinct and very clear about it. Because your average, you know, Joe on Main Street USA, they have no idea what happened back in 2007 with the Chinese up in space, right? They just don't know. It's hard to imagine it. And also, for a very long time, a lot of things have been very classified, so we weren't allowed to talk about it.[00:37:00]

So not only is it hard to envision it yourself, the information doesn't flow enough. And so I think, it's an uphill battle. I totally get that. It's an uphill battle, but it's one that must be attacked. And it's it's one that has to be won soon, because all of this is what enables this clear vision, this clear understanding of what a Guardian is and what the Space Force represents and what it does.

That is, that is the key that unlocks everything else. It unlocks the resources. It unlocks the policy because then people understand the relevance of the fight and the relevance of the organization that is in the fight. So, it's an uphill battle, but we gotta do it.

Doug Birkey: And I'm just gonna jump in on this and be really blunt.

I really hope Guardians embrace the notion of being a warfighter and the notion of peace through strength. Nobody wants a war in space, but for us to effectively deter that war and still secure our national security interests, we have to have the ability, the capability, the capacity, [00:38:00] and the credibility that we're going to hold targets at risk, and we're not going to hesitate. And I am hearing too much hesitation when we do talk to a lot of Guardian space professionals because they're still in this, this evolution, and, and I want to talk to a Guardian warfighter.

I don't need to talk to somebody from State Department, that's a different phone number. I'll call for that policy advice. And we need to move this up. I mean, General Saltzman has got it nailed, but it's a big force and we got to get this inculcated throughout. And that's kind of my next question is, how do we work the communications effort?

We just talked about it. We don't have a lot of senior leaders, so they can't be all places. Um, we got to talk to the Hill. We got to talk to the policy and budget world, the media, the public at large. How do you look at a better communications approach this time around? And, and what does winning look like?

Charles Galbreath: I'll start with that last part. What does winning look like? Well, winning looks like you get the authorities that you need, and you get the resources that you need in order to have the [00:39:00] capabilities to succeed and to prevail. Um, it is going to be, as Jen said, an uphill battle to convince the American people, to convince members of Congress, and to convince, you know, even some Guardians that they are in fact warfighters, that they are the leading edge of the nation's national security.

Um, how do we go about doing that? It's got to be an all out, you know, blitz if you're in the football season, full court press, whatever you want to do from an analogy perspective, but we've got to actively go out there and communicate it. Other services have had the benefit of decades and in many cases, generations of people doing that mission in that domain, uh, in that service.

And it's been, you know, immortalized in popular culture films and books and you know, stories, et cetera. We don't have that in space yet. It's going to take time to develop, but if we [00:40:00] don't start telling Guardian stories to the American people about, you know, there was a, you know, the, recent, attack against Israel that had so many incoming missiles. And, and there, some great Air Force pilots helped shoot down some of those missiles.

That, that's an incredible story. What I don't hear is the story of the crew that actually notified that those were incoming ballistic missiles, provided the tracks, provided the intelligence that enabled that defense to occur.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: All from space.

Charles Galbreath: All from space.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: All of that happened in space.

Charles Galbreath: Right! So, how do we, how do we tell that story so that, that American people, that we can all understand that?

That's absolutely critical.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: I think what right looks like is when you stop the next Joe Q. citizen on Main Street, USA, and you ask him what he knows about the Space Force, and he can tell ya. And he's, and he's got that same soundbite, as you will, that if you ask him what a marine does, he knows what a [00:41:00] marine does.

So, I think that's what right looks like. I think, and again, it's gonna take a minute to get there, but I think it's an admirable, uh, a goal to have.

Charles Galbreath: Well, tongue in cheek, you know, if Netflix does another series on Space Force, Steve Carell shouldn't be the leader. You know, Tom Cruise, you know, uh, someone like that because it's not a joke, right?

I mean, this, this, this is serious business.

Gen. Kevin Chilton, USAF (Ret.): Yeah, I'll, pile on here. This change is not going to happen unless the President of the United States turns to the Secretary of Defense and unleashes the offensive capabilities that we either have or don't have, because we certainly don't have insight into it and tells people that they can actually gain, give them the resources and the manning to actually gain and maintain space superiority. Until it comes from out of the White House and down to the Secretary of Defense loud and clear that any, any policy constraints put on this force in the past have been [00:42:00] removed.

Um, no one's going to believe it.

Doug Birkey: That's very well said. So Jen and Charles, you spent this fall highlighting the need to ensure Space Force is a lead DOD service tasked with executing spacepower roles and missions and that other services really shouldn't seek to recreate their own mini space forces within themselves and create these organic stovepipes.

And General Deptula you hit upon this earlier too. Advice for the new leadership team on this front?

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: Well, certainly what I think needs to happen is, is that there needs to be a solid discussion on roles and missions, right? That's the first thing. and you know, honestly, it's the right time. Um, U. S. Space Command, U. S. Space Force. They're about five years old. That's a good time to look at a larger organization and say .Hey, are we getting it right? Um, and then, listen, I absolutely agree with General Whiting, the commander of U. S. Space Command. He wants all the space resources he can get, [00:43:00] 100%.

Would never doubt that. What happens downstream, though, when there is, um, well, what to say? When there is, when there are unclear boundaries between who does what from a resourcing perspective. Well then what ends up happening is we have, um, duplication of effort, which is not okay. We may have things, that are supposed to be getting done and procured and provided, uh, organized, trained, and equipped that may be missed, because we are unclear on, who is supposed to do what?

And truly, truly, it comes back to resources. And so if resources are not being given to the Space Force, which we know is already resource constrained, because they are being shunted over to another service who, by all rights, should not be doing what they're trying to do. This is where the problem truly ends up that the Space Force is being starved resources, while other services are duplicating the efforts that they are not charged [00:44:00] by the UCP of actually doing.

Charles Galbreath: Absolutely. And I will say duplication is a useful tool when it's done intentionally, right? There may be a mission where we absolutely need some level of duplication because that target set is so critical to the overall campaign that I want to have an air asset, a ground asset, a Navy asset, and a space asset going after it.

Okay, that's great. But if you're doing it unintentionally and you're haphazardly, you are absolutely wasting resources. So the Space Force, the Chief of Space Operations is tagged with being the integrator of space, joint space capabilities. They need to be able to actively work with the other services to determine how everybody fits into this.

To basically be the conductor of the orchestra of the Department of Defense when it comes to space capabilities and effects. Roles and missions is absolutely critical, as Jen said. And that's not to say that there isn't a role or a [00:45:00] mission for the other services in space. But we have to define what those are going forward.

You know, as we've talked about, a B 21 going against a ground site might be the best way to attack a counter space capability. Let's have that discussion and let's make sure that we understand what those right roles and missions are. You know, we talk about the Army a lot. And we had a great debate with them last year.

Somehow I think it's going to continue in 2025. But let's just say this. Integrated missile defense, right? That's an army mission right now. That's an absolutely

critical mission. I need to make sure that they are focusing their attentions on missile defense and that will support the Space Force and, and Space Command.

I don't necessarily need them going after satellites, whether that's through a temporary means or, or through some other means, unless we have agreed that in the orchestra of things, that's the right move.

Doug Birkey: Yeah, I think at the end of the day, there's only so much money and so much bandwidth and if we don't go after the most effective, efficient options, people die and we [00:46:00] lose.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: Oh, 100%. And remember, the Space Force, it's not just about the money, but it's about, it's about the people. It's about the depth of training and knowledge. It's about having expertise. It's about having practice. It's about all of those things. Again, hyper focused on space. That is what the Space Force is about.

Gen. Kevin Chilton, USAF (Ret.): So, I'm going to be a little bit of a contrarian here. I kind of like the idea of the Army fielding jamming capability that they can jam adversary satellites around the world. So, we don't have to recruit a bunch of Space Force Guardians to be deployed around the world to do that. But those jammers have to be commanded and controlled by US Space Command. The Combat Command, not at the tactical unit to support a tactical operation. It may support a tactical operation, but you can't have that much independence out there because you could be affecting other things in the domain unintentionally. I like the idea of the Army having direct ascent at an anti-satellite capability.[00:47:00]

Under the command and control of U. S. Space Command in support of the Regional Combatant Commander. I like the idea of the Air Force, sending Air Force TOA to field directed energy weapons to put on airplanes to help hold at risk adversary satellites. Um, and I like the Navy having the ability to do the same off surface ships.

Uh, we demonstrated that in Operation Burnt Frost, the ability to destroy a satellite in orbit, um, and all in support of and under the command and control of U. S. Space Command. I think that's how you get after this problem in a broad way without, um, and that are the contributions that the other services can make.

Just as the Air Force provides A 10s and does close air support for the Army in the terrestrial domains. The other services need to step up, invest, and support

the ability or the capabilities that the Space Force and the [00:48:00] combatant commander need to gain and maintain space superiority, globally. All that said, I don't see any reason for the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marines to field their own constellation of satellites.

Um, that's a Space Force job, period, in my view.

Doug Birkey: So, there are also some spacepower tensions between DoD and the Intel community. Thoughts from the group on this?

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): Yeah, um, as you might expect, I'll jump right in here. Look, we're getting into an area where most people, Joe Q public in the United States, um, or Suzy Q public simply have no clue, with these kinds of organizational differences.

They just know that we've got stuff in the space. Well, it turns out that the National Reconnaissance Office is a member of the U. S. intelligence community as well as an agency of the [00:49:00] Department of Defense. And what it does is it designs, builds, launches, and operates U. S. reconnaissance satellites.

And it provides satellite intelligence, to a variety of U. S. government agencies. This is kind of a, a tutorial, but I think it's fundamental to understand. It provides signals intelligence, to the National Security Agency, imagery intelligence to the National Geospatial Geospatial Agency, and measurement and signatures intelligence to the Defense Intelligence Agency.

So, it was stood up in 1960. And the reason it was stood up was there was tension between the Air Force that was operating spacecraft at that time, and some elements of the government in that, they were concerned that the Air Force was going to funnel only the Air Force stuff. [00:50:00] Well, that was over a half a century ago.

And frankly, we didn't have a Space Force at that time, okay? We have come a long way in terms of maturing and understanding that information's fundamental to the operation of our nation's security enterprises. I don't think you need to, you know, uh, hammer that home too much with any of our service components.

Much less the Space Force. So, I think, you know, what I mentioned right up front is gonna get a lot of people's blood boiling when I talk about integrating NRO, NGA, uh, and MDA into the Space Force. But if we're really serious

about not having sufficient numbers of resources, one of the options that we need to take advantage of, then is consolidation to be able to do a much better job of achieving efficiencies with respect to unity of operations.

[00:51:00] I'll stop there but some of the comments that have already gone together with respect to taking a look at roles and functions. How do we do this? Better? How do we really make the U. S. Space Force, the premier operation that it deserves to be, uh, in optimizing the application of DoD space elements, in one location so we can achieve the synergies that come from unified effort.

Gen. Kevin Chilton, USAF (Ret.): You know, I'll, I'll pile on a little bit here with a slightly different slant. So, we have the USDI and we have the DoD. And we have these agencies, as Dave mentioned the NRO, NGA, NSA, who kind of sit in between. But really, their first priority is always to the U. S. Defense Intelligence Agency, [00:52:00] because that's who sits in the National Security Council and answers the President and the Vice President's questions.

There's never been a case in the past where the overhead reconnaissance from space and Dave can attest to this, provided timely enough information to affect the ongoing battle, whether it was in Desert Storm or Iraqi freedom, et cetera. And it's because there weren't enough assets to meet all the requirements and the requirements of the USDI trumped the requirements of the regional combatant commander.

And perhaps we're moving into an era where we're going to have so much reconnaissance from space that a little bit of that will be relieved. But at the end of the day, what's most important is who has the authority to task the reconnaissance satellite in space.

In other words, to take a picture. Who has the authority to tell us to take a picture of these coordinates and provide it to [00:53:00] me in this amount of time. And that tasking authority has to devolve down to the regional combatant commander. And if not, I don't care who's building the satellites. Um, we're never going to be able to effectively use our space assets to deter and prosecute warfare. Failing the NRO's ability to do that, Space Force, in my view, needs to build their own, constellation of reconnaissance satellites that they control, operate, and task, and have the tasking authority to support the regional combatant commanders.

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): Yeah, by the way, as Chili said, I subscribe to what he just said a thousand percent, because I lived that in reality during Desert Storm.

I lived it during Operation Enduring Freedom. And even during Operation Unified Assistance. We couldn't even [00:54:00] use, um, weather satellites to provide information, uh, to the nations that suffered the tsunami impact in 2004 and 2005. Think about that! Now we're well beyond that today, and we're to the point where quite frankly now with the capabilities that commercial companies can provide, um, you're going to see, well, you already see it with other nations, um, but they're going to those organizations to be able to get direct downlinks to be able to get that real time information that's so necessary.

I've argued this point so many times in the Pentagon, I just have, you know, you just get beat down because they keep on saying, no, there's nothing wrong with the system the way it is. Well, the fact of the matter is there's a lot wrong with it.

Doug Birkey: Okay, we're getting short on time here, but we cannot leave this conversation without talking about money.

So, what are your thoughts for the incoming team when it comes to resourcing? I mean, Secretary [00:55:00] Kendall is pretty blunt about this one in his final months in office, about the need for more money for the Space Force. Should this drumbeat continue?

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: So, I'll begin if I could, please. And the answer is yes, but I want to add some nuance to it.

First of all, General Deptula, sir, you've already talked about it, General Chilton, sir, you've mentioned, we've all mentioned it. The Space Force budget is simply too small, and in just the most bizarre turn of events, it got cut. Which is crazy in the first five years of a new service, which is also getting more and more and more tasks on its plate.

But something that I want everybody to think about is that if, in fact, we have budgetary restraints on the department, on the overall Department of Defense. Then again, what we have to talk about is a shuffle of resources inside the department. If the TOA, overall TOA does not increase, okay, then increasing the TOA, the Total Obligation Authority, the [00:56:00] top line, the budget, the amount of money handed to each service, then that has to be shuffled from within the department.

And I don't think people necessarily think about that, right? It comes back to the roles and missions. Are we aligned with what we're paying for from each of the military departments? And one thing that cannot happen is we cannot carve this

out of the Air Force budget, okay? Too much has been carved out of the Air Force.

Most of the personnel from the Space Force. came from the Air Force. So, um, there was an end strength reduction there. There was money that was carved out of the Department of the Air Force taken from the Air Force to give to the Space Force. And all of that in, in previous time was just and righteous. We cannot continue to do that.

That money has to come from elsewhere. And if it cannot be an increase in overall TOA to the Department of Defense, we have to look at roles and missions and take money from those other departments and other services based on what's actually happening [00:57:00] out there. And, and if we do that in all seriousness, you will find that the Space Force deserves more money and they're going to take it from the other departments.

Charles Galbreath: I'll pile on a little bit there because, you know, last year we heard some of the other Service Chiefs and other senior leaders within the Navy and the Army and the Marine Corps talking about how critical space is to them, you know if you don't have space forget about it. That that sort of mindset. That is that is great but we've got to follow that up with the budget and what Jen is saying of rebalancing within the Department of Defense is absolutely critical. I'll say this for the incoming Secretary of the Air Force and the team that is gonna leave the Department of the Air Force If you don't advocate for the resources you need to do your mission, no one else will.

All of those accolades and, you know, support from the other services and other military leaders, uh, that was great. It didn't come with a check, right? And we need to make sure that you, as the new Secretary of the Air Force, [00:58:00] are advocating for the resources and the capabilities that you, the Air Force, and the Space Force absolutely need, because no one else will.

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): Hey, let me just emphasize that because I've been trying to remind people that doing what Charles just said is being joint, okay? A lot of people go, oh, well, wait a second, jointness means, you know, saying nice things about the other guy. No! Jointness means advocating and articulating for the capabilities that only your particular service can bring to the fight. Because if you don't do that, then our combatant commands in putting together joint task forces will not be able to understand how your particular service component can contribute. So, that's saying it in a different way, but advocating and [00:59:00] articulating for the virtues and values of the Space Force, is being joint.

Charles Galbreath: You know, I'm reminded of every time I've ever been on an airplane as a passenger because I'm not a pilot. Right? You always hear the safety brief. If an oxygen mask comes down, put on your oxygen mask before helping those around you. That's what we have to do from a service perspective.

We've got to give ourselves the capabilities and the resources that we need before we can provide that support to the other services that they need.

Doug Birkey: Well, we're at the time end of a time block. I cannot thank you all enough for joining today. But again, this is hugely important and it's going to be interesting to see how it plays out over the next 4 years.

But one thing's for certain we're going to need with those Guardians provide.

Charles Galbreath: Thanks Doug. Thanks for the conversation. Everybody.

Jennifer "Boots" Reeves: Really happy to be here. This is great guys.

Lt. Gen. David Deptula, USAF (Ret.): Yeah, have a great space power kind of day.

Gen. Kevin Chilton, USAF (Ret.): Great discussion today. Thanks for allowing me to be a part of it. [01:00:00]

Doug Birkey: And with that, I'd like to extend a big thank you to our guests for joining in today's discussion.

I'd also like to extend a thank you to our listeners for your continued support and for tuning into today's show. And if you like what you've heard today, don't forget to hit that like button and follow or subscribe to Airspace Advantage. You can also leave a comment to let us know what you think about our show or areas that you think we should explore further.

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