

Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

Committee on Armed Services

U.S. House of Representatives

May 19, 2017

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Statement for the Record

Introduction

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Cooper, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be here on behalf of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), and our national security space activities. It is an honor to appear alongside my mission partners from the DoD and the Intelligence Community (IC), all of whom are critical to maintaining our nation's intelligence and warfighting superiority.

Due to the unclassified nature of this portion of the hearing, I cannot discuss the specifics of NRO programs, but I am proud of the numerous mission successes and achievements the NRO has had over the past year. I welcome the opportunity to provide more on NRO capabilities and successes during the classified session.

NRO's Critical Mission

The NRO is responsible for developing, acquiring, launching and operating the nation's overhead Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) architecture. The unique nature of overhead ISR collection allows timely access to locations around the world without risk of violating international law or putting U.S. personnel in danger. It also allows the flexibility necessary to be where we need to be, when we need to be there, and for as long as we're required. And, we continue to deliver innovative solutions and enable intelligence integration, assessment, and problem solving across geographic boundaries and intelligence domains.

The NRO supports a diverse mission set. We support the Geospatial-Intelligence (GEOINT), Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), and Human Intelligence (HUMINT) missions, and we are the foundation of the United States' (U.S.) global situational awareness. We contribute to global intelligence, military, and homeland security operations, while simultaneously assisting with the formation of national policy and achieving diplomatic goals. We provide direct support to U.S. warfighters, help protect U.S. borders, and contribute significantly to the fight against ISIS and other counter-terrorism operations. NRO capabilities contribute to the U.S.'s ability to improve battlespace awareness, deter aggression and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, combat terrorism, identify and track High-Value Targets, and conduct security operations worldwide.

Workforce and Innovation

The foundation of NRO mission capabilities and contributions are our people—military, civilian, contractor support—and our partners in industry and academia. All are critical, and

everyone counts. Our people are behind every mission success, and enable the direct support we provide to the Combatant Commands, their Service and Functional Components, and deployed tactical units. We don't just offer our military units and warfighters direct support, but also the education, training, exercise support, and subject matter expertise required to make full use of NRO systems, capabilities, data, and collection techniques.

The NRO workforce is not just talented but empowered to innovate. We instill a culture of innovation and risk tolerance in everything we do at the NRO. NRO innovation comes in many forms to include using existing satellites and sensor capabilities differently; developing new "apps" for our space and ground systems; and developing the new capabilities critical to closing intelligence collection gaps. We're also working with our mission partners to ensure we fully leverage commercial products, services, and capabilities, allowing us to focus our resources on that which only we can do.

NRO's Performance Excellence

The NRO is a small, flat, end-to-end organization fully capable of successfully delivering an increasingly capable, integrated, resilient, and affordable architecture. We have control of every function required, from the R&D that enables us to stay ahead of targets and threats, to the acquisitions required to deliver new capabilities to space and ground, to the operations required to use, adapt, and upgrade those capabilities to respond to changing mission imperatives in the field.

The NRO manages the majority of the IC's Major Systems Acquisitions (MSAs). Currently, all 15 of our MSAs are "green," meaning they are meeting or exceeding cost,

schedule, and performance metrics. This year, the NRO received its 8th consecutive clean financial management audit, demonstrating our ability to properly manage all resources entrusted to us.

NRO Strategic Thrusts

Today's space enterprise was designed under the assumption that space was safe from intentional adversary interference and the ground infrastructure was designed with little emphasis on reliability or resiliency. We are transforming our ground and space architectures with the capability to collect against the most challenging targets—even in the presence of adversary actions. The NRO's Strategic Thrusts reflect that imperative. Our organizational priorities are to 1) develop our workforce, which I previously highlighted, 2) advance overhead collection capabilities, 3) transform ground and transport architectures, and 4) deliver end-to-end resiliency.

The NRO is advancing the sensor sensitivity of overhead SIGINT and GEOINT capabilities to collect against lower power signals and fleeting targets. We are improving the area persistence of our space-based systems to provide greater "time on target" to observe and characterize activities and the potential relationship between activities. We are working to reduce "sensor to shooter" timelines to get the right information to those who need it, when they need it. We're also developing smaller, less expensive satellites that can be launched in larger quantities to enhance our current architecture performance against high value and fleeting targets.

We're continuing to advance our ground-based processing techniques and algorithms. Our Sentient program—a "thinking" system that allows automated, multi-intelligence tipping and cueing at machine speeds—has been focused against many of our most challenging mission sets, resulting in new intelligence information that human-in-the-loop systems would have missed. Our Future Ground Architecture will leverage Sentient, and create an integrated cloud-based enterprise that will share tasking and intelligence products quickly across each of our ground sites, increasing both performance and resilience.

But the ability of the NRO to provide space-based collection is at risk. In February, this Committee was briefed by the IC and DoD on the current status of space threats. The NRO is aggressively developing the technical, operational, and architectural resiliency enhancements necessary to respond to those threats, and ensure our capabilities will continue to support our policy makers and warfighters.

Our Shared Challenge

Staying ahead of the adversaries who threaten our space capabilities is a challenge. Those adversaries are making space a priority, investing heavily, and accepting the risks necessary for rapid progress. The U.S. has not been keeping pace. I believe we have not made the investment that would indicate space is a priority—a fundamental—to the U.S. I believe the legislative and executive branches do not have the risk tolerance required to support rapid forward progress; our adversaries do. Our requirements, budget, and acquisition processes are disconnected, and none of them moves quickly. Failure is not well tolerated, even in the research and development activities required to keep our space capabilities relevant and vital,

or to improve their resiliency. National Security Space is a team sport, and everyone on the team—those in the executive branch and the congress—must do all they can to advance its capabilities and improve its resilience to threats. We must have processes that are integrated, that move faster, and that demonstrate greater risk tolerance. We must re-commit to space as a National priority, and imperative. This Committee has been out in front, trying to drive the changes required. We at the NRO applaud your efforts and appreciate your continued support.

Conclusion

I am proud to represent the talented women and men of the NRO. It is our highly-skilled personnel who go above and beyond to deliver the NRO's mission of providing "Innovative Overhead Intelligence Systems for National Security." We will strive to develop, acquire, launch, and operate the increasingly capable and resilient systems required to meet the needs of all those we serve, from the highest level policymakers to the warfighters in harm's way. We are inspired by this Committee's efforts to address the barriers to the change—and the pace of change—required to advance national security space. We have the people with the talent, commitment, and passion necessary to take us forward—we only need to empower and enable them to succeed.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for your continued support of the National Reconnaissance Office, our People, and our mission.