



SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

JUL 11 2017

The Honorable Michael Turner
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Turner:

I write to express my strong support for your amendment that calls for further study before establishing a separate Space Corps within the Department of the Air Force. Such a study is consistent with on-going efforts directed in the FY17 NDAA to assess the range of management and organizational options across the entire national security space enterprise. The results of the study offered in your amendment will inform the Service and Congress on the necessary manpower, budget, function, and time necessary to establish a Space Corps, if chosen.

I agree with the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Sub-Committee that there are a number of very real challenges regarding the nation's ability to deter and ultimately prevail in a conflict that extends to space. I share their concern about the rapidly emerging threat and the heretofore response to fully address the threat. The Air Force is too small for the missions the nation expects of it. This year's budget proposal starts to turn the corner to restore the Service. It includes a proposed 20% increase in funding for space.

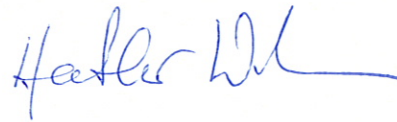
Nonetheless, I do not believe establishing a Space Corps is the right immediate course of action. Creation of a separate Space Corps at this time would create additional seams between the Services, disrupt ongoing efforts to establish a warfighting culture and new capabilities, and require costly duplication of personnel and resources. At a time when the Congress is seeking to reduce overhead and the number of flag officers, a Chief of Staff for Space with the responsibilities described in the legislation would have a headquarters element similar to the Marine Corps. Yet, all of Space Command, including every support element attached to it is less than 10% of the size of the Marine Corps. If the intent is to include only true space operators, it would be only about 2,500 people. It may be hard to believe, but the Air Force operates the entire GPS constellation for our military and for a billion users around the world with a squadron of only about 40 people.

But it is not just size and overhead cost that is a factor we should consider. Since the Goldwater-Nichols Act, the U.S. military has been integrating operations, not segmenting them, and we are a more effective military because of it. If we can justify a separate space force, we can justify a separate service for submarines, for cyber warriors, for the Army Corps of Engineers to run our water projects, for the military health service, or for special operations. We are seeking to integrate, normalize and elevate space as part of the joint warfighting team. In short, any option that separates space operations from the joint warfighter will be counterproductive to addressing the very real threats that exist.

With the support of Congress, the Department of Defense, sister Services, and partner nations, the Air Force is taking a number of very significant steps to address the emerging threats to space. Our FY18 budget request includes a substantial increase in funding for space capabilities, and with the support of Congress, we would anticipate continued increases. We are providing airmen the tools, training, infrastructure, and warfighting ethos necessary to ensure space superiority. We have fielded and are continuing to develop a number of systems to improve our strategic, operational, and tactical awareness of the space battlespace. I directed establishment of a Deputy Chief of Staff for Space Operations, reporting directly to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, to synchronize space activities across the Air Force and provide dedicated leadership for the domain at the Headquarters. We are streamlining our space acquisition process to reduce the time from concept to fielding capability. In accordance with the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, space acquisition authority has been returned to the Air Force. The Air Force established the National Space Defense Center and the FY18 budget request includes funding for an integrated command and control center for space operations at that center. This operations center includes the Intelligence Community and all of the military services.

Our adversaries are innovating faster than we are and narrowing the gap on land, at sea, in the air, in cyberspace and in space. We should be concerned. I am committed to working with Congress to identify and adopt additional measures to protect and prevail should a conflict extend to space. Thank you for your consideration and continued support.

Respectfully,



Heather Wilson
Secretary of the Air Force