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2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
FACSIMILE (202) 225-4784
MINORITY (202) 225-5074
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June 18, 2007

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

The Subcommittee's recent hearing entitled, "Weaponizing Space: Is Current U.S. Policy Protecting Our National Security?" raised a number of additional questions as to the impact of current and future United States policies towards the use of outer space.

The proliferation of space technologies around the world may pose a security threat to space assets on which the U.S. military is highly dependent for situational awareness and combat operations. According to a U.S. Air Force National Air and Space Intelligence Center report, current U.S. space superiority will erode as a result of several trends already underway. Moreover, the report declares that U.S. reliance on space for military operations makes its assets a primary target for adversaries.

Concerns were raised at the Subcommittee's hearing that given the increasing number of civil, commercial, and military satellite objects in space, rules of the road type guidelines and increased international cooperation on space issues are needed. In this regard, the Subcommittee requests the Government Accountability Office examine the issue of whether diplomatic approaches through bilateral military exchanges and through international organizations are needed, as is an unambiguous understanding of U.S. objectives in space.

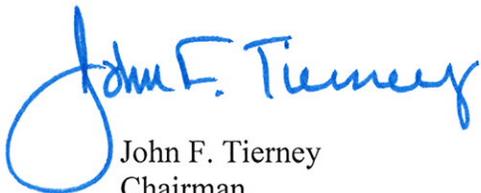
The Subcommittee is also interested in determining the extent to which the U.S. military is taking a risk-based approach to dealing with the emerging threats to space-based assets, from an all-hazards perspective. This would include a comprehensive review of threats, identifying critical space assets, weighing risk, and determining ways to mitigate the risk, including through the use of diplomatic tools.

In addition to diplomatic approaches for controlling space, we specifically request GAO examine the following questions and report back its findings and recommendations to the Subcommittee in an unclassified format:

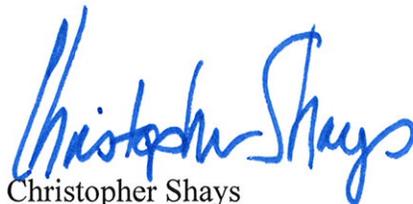
- 1) What are the current and likely potential threats to U.S. military space assets? What are the current capabilities of nations and terrorist groups to defeat, deter, disable, disarm, or destroy U.S. space assets—both military and commercial?
- 2) What United States actions are underway or planned to address U.S. vulnerabilities and anticipated threats? To what extent have the Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. Air Force, and other departments and agencies conducted a risk assessment to identify critical space assets and to determine courses of action and the level of resources needed to reduce risk? Do the courses of action include potential diplomatic (bilateral, multilateral, or international) or other risk mitigation efforts to dissuade other nations from developing space weapons?
- 3) To what extent have DOD and other departments and agencies programmed and allocated resources and adjusted concepts of operations, doctrine, organization, training, personnel, and equipment to address space vulnerabilities?
- 4) How does the current National Space Policy materially differ from the national policy which preceded its adoption and what impact has the current policy had on the actions of other space-faring nations? How is the National Space Policy reflected in the DOD Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), and what is the status of any studies ordered from the QDR?
- 5) What is DOD's long-term military strategy towards the use of space and what are current and long-term spending and budgetary implications of the strategy? How does this strategy relate to current international treaties to which the U.S. is a party or to other obligations for cooperation in space?

If you have any questions, please contact Andrew Su on the majority staff or Christopher Bright on the minority staff of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Subcommittee.

Sincerely,



John F. Tierney
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security
And Foreign Affairs



Christopher Shays
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security
And Foreign Affairs