



National Reconnaissance Office
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Release #6-26
July 13, 2026

The Honorable Christopher J. Scolese departs the National Reconnaissance Office after seven years of distinguished leadership

Dr. Scolese's term is second-longest tenure of any NRO director

CHANTILLY, VA – The Honorable Christopher J. Scolese, who served as director of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) since August 1, 2019, departed from the NRO Friday, July 10, after almost seven years in office.

“It has been a tremendous experience to lead the NRO during an era of remarkable innovation,” Dr. Scolese said. “I am so proud of the capabilities we put on orbit, the expanded partnerships that enable us to leverage cutting-edge technologies, and the talented team that continues to push the boundaries of what’s possible.”

Serving as the 19th director of the NRO and the first to be Presidentially appointed and Senate-confirmed, Dr. Scolese led the NRO in embarking on the most comprehensive technological transformation in its nearly 65-year history. Under his leadership, the NRO significantly expanded its overhead intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities to deliver the most advanced and capable government ISR constellation in the nation’s history. In just two years, the NRO put more than 200 satellites on orbit – most as part of a proliferated architecture that aims to shorten revisit times; process, fuse, and deliver data in near-real time; and build resilience by eliminating single points of failure. With a magnitude more data to process, the NRO’s ground systems also evolved under Dr. Scolese’s leadership to better meet the needs of warfighters, analysts, policymakers, and other users. The NRO is automating the processing and delivery of data – leveraging advanced data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning to process information faster and with greater accuracy.

Dr. Scolese led the NRO’s development of its first enterprise-wide AI strategy, a roadmap for integrating AI throughout the organization; and worked with industry to create an Ultra Dense Environment – a one-of-a-kind research and development environment supporting the ongoing development of foundational AI models at scale. He also strengthened partnerships with other government agencies, industry, academia, and international allies. Under Dr. Scolese’s leadership, the NRO has put several research and development demonstrators on orbit to test new technologies, concepts and capabilities. Its Space Reconnaissance Laboratory earned designation as a federal lab, opening new opportunities for research and collaboration. And it has expanded its relationships with new and existing commercial partners, including developing new contracting mechanisms to accelerate acquisitions and ensure the NRO can access the latest technologies to advance its mission.

“Amid an evolving global threat environment and an increasingly contested space domain, the NRO’s information advantage is more critical than ever,” Dr. Scolese said. “Our investments in innovative technology, infrastructure, partnerships, and the workforce ensure an even stronger foundation for continued success.”

Dr. Scolese’s legacy is most apparent in his support of the NRO workforce. He oversaw the expansion of the NRO Cadre, a civilian workforce that has enabled the NRO to invest in the continuity and expertise of its team, and expanded the NRO’s highly competitive internship program. And for every year of Dr. Scolese’s leadership, the NRO earned a clean audit opinion, extending its record to 17 consecutive clean audit opinions. This milestone reflects the NRO’s fiscal responsibility and is an unparalleled achievement in the Intelligence Community.

“The NRO could not succeed without the skill and dedication of our workforce,” he said. “The team’s commitment to excellence has long been the hallmark of the NRO, and I am confident that will continue as we look toward the future and whatever challenges lie ahead.”

Until a new director is Senate-confirmed, NRO’s [Principal Deputy Director Bill Adkins](#) will be performing the duties of the NRO director.

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Ever since its inception at the dawn of the space age more than 60 years ago, the NRO has brought the farthest reaches of the planet into our grasp — to see it, hear it, and sense it. Today, the NRO is building on that legacy of innovation, harnessing the limitless potential of space to make our nation even safer and stronger. Learn more at [NRO.gov](#).