



**Statement for the Record of Dr. Christopher J. Scolese
Director, National Reconnaissance Office**

**House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces
Hearing on “Fiscal Year 2026 National Security Space Programs”**

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Chairman DesJarlais, Ranking Member Moulton, and members of the subcommittee... I'm honored to join you today along with my colleagues, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Yaffe, Maj. Gen. Purdy, and Vice Admiral Whitworth... and to represent the people of the National Reconnaissance Office.

For 64 years, the NRO has been at the leading edge of innovation, developing space-based capabilities that advance our national security. Today, the NRO is building on that legacy, and moving faster than ever before thanks to the technical expertise and talent of our small and highly effective workforce.

Today we are accelerating the build-out, launch, and operations of the world's most capable, resilient, and technologically advanced satellite constellation. We are strengthening the capabilities and security of our ground architecture. And we are deepening our partnerships across government, private industry, academia, and our allies.

Our mission is clear – to achieve the President's objective of “peace through strength.”

This is especially critical as our competitors are seeking to deny our strategic advantage in space. With Congress' continued support, we will ensure America remains the world's leader in space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

Over the past two years, the NRO has dramatically transformed our space operations, launching more than 200 satellites to create the largest and most capable government constellation in our nation's history, providing data to our partners sitting with me here today, as well as to NSA and others.

This constellation adds capability and resilience through shorter revisit times, increased observational persistence, and faster processing and transmission of data.

With the support of Congress, the NRO will continue to invest in capabilities that are helping to solve some of the toughest intelligence challenges of our time:

- Employing advanced technologies makes it harder for our adversaries to hide, giving the U.S. decision advantage.
- Using different orbits and proliferating our systems allow us to track more objects more reliably.



- Diversifying systems in space and on the ground increases resilience.
- Employing AI techniques in advanced data systems allows us to provide more information faster to users – especially intelligence analysts and policymakers to warfighters down-range, allowing them to make critical decisions with the best information.
- Developing leading-edge research in photonics, quantum sensing, advanced materials, and AI/ML prepare us for the future.

All of these advanced capabilities as well as those in development allow us to rapidly support current challenges like the crisis in Ukraine and narcotics trafficking... to future demands in the Pacific and implementation of the Golden Dome.

The NRO's talented workforce is delivering unparalleled capabilities – on orbit, on the ground, and everywhere in between. But we can't do it alone.

We are continuing to build partnerships across government, academia, industry, and with allied nations that enable us to leverage innovative technologies and maximize our impact:

- Working with our intelligence community partners, our world-class constellation and ground architecture will fuse data across collection platforms to provide automated tipping and cueing to enable analysts' and warfighters' success. For example, working with DIA, we accredited tools and capabilities to enable data fusion, improving intelligence outcomes.
- We have a close and productive relationship with NASA and the U.S. Space Force to support coordinated investment in space science and technology.
- Through an increasing number of commercial partnerships, we're leveraging commercial satellite buses, launch services, and data – from electro-optical to radar and RF, as well as other phenomenologies. We're fusing commercial data streams with national data streams, making them more readily available to our customers.
- Our enduring partnership with the U.S. Space Force exemplifies the power of interagency collaboration, enabling us to reliably access space for NRO systems. The Space Force has been an exceptional partner, particularly in its work incorporating NRO-specific requirements into Phase 3 of the National Security Space Launch Program through both Lane 1 and Lane 2 options. Just last month we launched the first mission under the NSSL Phase 3 Lane 1 launch service. It went from award to launch in just six months, an unprecedented speed – fast-tracking capability to the warfighter. This successful model of partnership sets the foundation for broader engagement with other agencies and allies.



The NRO's continued success in maintaining our competitive advantage and keeping America safe depends on our ability to innovate, our investments in our workforce and our partnerships, and on Congress' continued support for our mission.

We are committed to delivering on our mission effectively and efficiently, achieving acquisition efficiencies by leveraging both our Title 10 and Title 50 authorities. Our responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars is best illustrated by our 16th consecutive clean financial statement audit for Fiscal Year 2024.

Members of the Committee, the NRO is well positioned to provide the intelligence collection from denied areas that is required for our national defense. From the vantage point of space, we collect and deliver information critical to meeting our nation's highest priority – protecting safety and security at home and abroad.

On behalf of the entire NRO workforce, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering your questions.

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