

OPENING STATEMENT  
**Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Space  
*“Space Situational Awareness: Whole of Government Perspectives on Roles and Responsibilities”*  
June 22, 2018

Good morning, and welcome to our distinguished witnesses. I’d like to thank both Chairmen for holding this joint hearing on an issue that is so important to the safety and sustainability of our operations in space.

As outer space is becoming an increasingly active environment for commercial activities as well as science, exploration, and national security operations, the potential for congestion and collision with space debris or other spacecraft poses significant risks to the sustainability of our space operations.

And, there is a real chance that these risks could get worse with more nations pursuing space activities and companies planning mega-constellations of small satellites in low Earth orbit.

We can’t afford to let that happen, given that we rely so heavily on space for GPS locational, timing, and navigation information, communications, national security, scientific and human space operations, and much more.

Presently, the U.S. Strategic Command handles the tracking of space objects, the projection of close approaches and potential collisions among objects, and information sharing with satellite operators regarding those risks. Gen. Hyten, we appreciate your service and leadership on this effort.

We also benefit from NASA’s technical expertise and international leadership on orbital debris research, modeling, and mitigation, as well as its expertise in collision avoidance.

And while these government capabilities have served us so well for many decades, the challenges and complexity of the current and future space activities require that we do more to ensure the safety of the space environment.

Earlier this week the President signed Space Policy Directive-3 on National Space Traffic Management Policy. This policy directs the Department of Commerce to take on the role of space situational awareness data and information sharing with non-U.S. government operators so that the Department of Defense can focus on its military mission.

I appreciate the President’s interest in this issue. However, there are still many unanswered questions related to roles and responsibilities for SSA data and information sharing.

For example, I hope today's discussion will give us a clear understanding of the SSA activities currently carried out by the U.S. Strategic Command, which ones would be transferred to a civil entity, and which responsibilities DOD would keep if a civil agency were to assume an SSA role?

I also hope that we learn more about what DOD's relationship would be with the civil Federal agency tasked with providing SSA data sharing and information services to non-U.S. government entities.

And I have a number of other questions, such as, what are the pros and cons of the proposal to transition civil SSA activities to the Department of Commerce? And, how would having this responsibility at Commerce differ from having it at FAA, as the interagency consensus reached during the Obama Administration?

In closing, while I am pleased that we are holding this joint hearing to begin exploring the issues surrounding space situational awareness, I hope that the Science Committee will hold additional hearings with stakeholders so that Members can have the opportunity to get all the necessary perspectives before we legislate on this important issue.

Thank you, and I yield back.