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Space Power for War Fighters

THE SUMMER 2004 issue of *Air and Space Power Journal (ASPJ)*, which focused on space power, was so well received that Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, and other organizations asked for extra copies. Because we still receive such requests, we decided to publish an encore issue to update the professional dialogue. Several interrelated questions involving the theory, organization, and force structure of the fast-evolving topic of space power seem prominent in today's Air Force.

Like their airpower cohorts, some advocates of space power still seek an overarching theory to explain the fundamental concepts that govern operations in their domain of choice. Whether such a theory is truly necessary remains an open question since pragmatically minded space operators have achieved quite remarkable things without any broadly accepted theory. Several fundamental questions raised by space professionals involve space power's proper role vis-à-vis other forces. Should space merely support air, land, sea, and cyberspace forces, or should it have a more independent role, perhaps including space combat? Can other forces support space forces? These unresolved conceptual questions lead directly to more inquiries about how best to organize military space forces.

Organizational possibilities run the gamut from those designed to improve liaison with other forces to those intended to establish an independent space service. Creation of the director of space forces (DIRSPACEFOR) position, a recent effort to integrate space operations more closely with those of other forces, marks a relatively small organizational change. Establishment of an independent space force does not appear imminent, but how should one organize space forces if space combat becomes a reality?

Constant realignments of space-related military agencies such as US Space Command (established in 1985, disbanded in 2002) and US Strategic Command (which absorbed US Space

Command) reflect a turbulent organizational climate, but one can conceive of even more drastic space realignments. Just as the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 influenced creation of the Department of Homeland Security, so might a "space Pearl Harbor"—a possibility raised by the Rumsfeld Commission report of 2001—prompt a reorganization of military space. Nothing guarantees that the civilian space program under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration would remain distinct from military space activities. Recent events such as the response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 are leading to reappraisals of traditional civil-military relationships within the government.

Theoretical and organizational questions cause one to wonder about which space force structure to build. The high cost of space operations means that we need to make judicious choices about the capabilities we develop. Exciting possibilities loom on the horizon, but experts disagree about how to prioritize alternative systems. Which launch systems should we develop? Should we field space weaponry? If space power's proper function is to support air, land, sea, and cyberspace operations, then the current force structure resembles what we need. Conversely, if space becomes a military operating medium on par with other environments, then we need major changes. However, such alterations might prove expensive at a time when all military services find themselves competing for scarce resources.

Determining how space power can best contribute to national defense will be a long-term process with very high stakes. Careful thought and analysis might make the difference between national success and failure in space. The Air Force plays the leading role in US military operations in space and boasts a world-class cadre of space professionals capable of engaging these matters intellectually. *ASPJ*, the professional journal of the Air Force, dedicates this issue to advancing the professional dialogue about space power. □