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Outer Space at Risk: New Study Spotlights Anti-Satellite and Space Debris Threats

Waterloo, Ontario

Anti-satellite weapons and space debris are increasing threats to the security of outer space, concludes *Space Security 2007*, released today:

- Ongoing anti-satellite programs are increasing international tensions over the security of outer space
- Debris from China's recent anti-satellite test has created a serious problem for the routine and safe operations of all nations' spacecraft
- It is in all nations' self-interest to safeguard use of the space environment, but there is a widening impasse on how to do this

The US continues to have a small and controversial program for space-based ballistic missile defense and proto-technologies that may form the basis for future space-based weapons. More immediate threats come from weapons programs on Earth, demonstrated by the Chinese anti-satellite test on 11 January 2007. "There is growing tension between the US and China over the security of outer space, largely driven by mistrust and suspicions over weapons programs," says Dr. Ray Williamson, Executive Director of Secure World Foundation, a contributor to the report.

Increase in space debris is a related danger highlighted by *Space Security 2007*. The Chinese ASAT test created 1500 pieces of trackable debris in heavily used orbits - one of the worst manmade debris-creating events in history - but debris caused by routine space operations is also a problem. "Since 2004, the annual production of new debris has been steadily rising, following a decline in the 1990s," says Dr. William Marshall from the NASA Ames Research Center who advised research for the report. "Even a small piece of metal, traveling at 7.5 km/second, can destroy a spacecraft worth billions of dollars."

Space Security 2007 also points to a widening impasse on how to manage these threats. "International efforts to restrict conventional weapons from space have been stalled for decades. In part this is because the US has been unwilling to support such efforts. This position was reaffirmed by the US National Space Policy released in October 2006, which opposes new agreements that would limit US freedom of action in space," explains Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr., a former US Ambassador for Nonproliferation. Williamson adds that "the Chinese ASAT test has prompted some US officials to call for a revived US ASAT effort."

"Outer space is of strategic concern to a growing number of countries," explains Dr. M. Lucy Stojak, a faculty member at the International Space University. "It accounts for over US\$100-billion in global revenues and is indispensable to national and human security, health, education, and disaster management. It is in everyone's interest to safeguard the sustainable use of the space environment."

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“*Space Security 2007* joins its predecessors as a trustworthy interdisciplinary source of information for policymakers required to understand and balance the competing demands and resulting tensions of commercial, military and civil uses of space,” says John Siebert, Executive Director of Project Ploughshares, which coordinated the report.

Space Security 2007 is the only comprehensive source of data and analysis on space activities and their cumulative impact on the security of outer space.

The report is part of an annual series produced by the Space Security Index, whose partners include the Cypress Fund for Peace and Security, the Institute of Air and Space Law at McGill University, Project Ploughshares, Secure World Foundation, the Simons Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Research at the University of British Columbia, and the Space Generation Foundation. It is supported by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Ford Foundation.

Project Ploughshares is affiliated with the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo.

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“Over the past year we have seen a number of important developments in space which force us to think even more critically about how to achieve stability in this arena. *Space Security 2007* is an excellent review of the developments in military and civil space and how they affect space security. It is essential for space professionals and political leaders to understand these developments.”

Brigadier General Simon P. Worden
United States Air Force (Ret.).

“The Space Security Index is a one-stop-shopping site for all those with an interest in the security issues that affect civil, commercial, and military operations in space. It serves as both a repository of objective data and as an overview of trends, making it a particularly useful resource for those who are new to field as well as a must-have document for researchers, industry, legislators and policy-makers with space-related responsibilities.”

Theresa Hitchens
Director, Center for Defense Information

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