

# 2014 NDAA Directs DoD to Address Gaps in Space Capabilities

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You may have read the news recently that the People's Republic of China has landed a probe and rover on the moon. Interesting story, right? Whatever thoughts the Chang'e-3 lander and accompanying Jade Rabbit rover elicited, it would be worthwhile to consider what a technological accomplishment like this by China means. China is demonstrating rapidly evolving technological capabilities. It is also inexorably moving to weaponize space.

The United States has a lead in this area of technology, but that lead is rapidly eroding and the Department of Defense knows it. China's lunar capabilities show that not only can China successfully launch and target an intercontinental ballistic missile (a.k.a. a rocket with a nuclear warhead instead of a lunar lander) it can also employ command and control capabilities on a global basis. This fact undoubtedly keeps the DoD's leadership awake at night and now it has also grabbed the attention of Congress, which is poised to pass the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014. This iteration of the NDAA contains provisions calling out the importance of space as a domain that the DoD must invest in to protect the United States. Congressionally mandated investment is good news for industry, which will play a critical role in providing the DoD with the goods and services it needs to get the job done.

What exactly are these provisions? The first is Section 912, "National Security Space Defense and Protection," which directs the Secretary of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence to address near- and long-term threats to U.S. national security space systems by reviewing those threats and reporting on measures being taken to mitigate them. Such a review could lead to the exposure of a number of gaps that the DoD will be required to address and gaps often lead to procurements. One gap that comes to mind immediately is stovepiping of satellite control operations. Earlier this year [the GAO criticized the DoD](#) for deploying standalone satellite control operations networks designed to operate a single satellite system, as opposed to shared systems that can operate multiple kinds of satellites. Other gaps include bandwidth shortages and antiquated ground stations.

The second NDAA provision is Section 913 concerning "Space Acquisition Policy." In this section the Congress scolds the DoD for habitually using single-year leases for securing commercial satellite services, calling them "the most expensive and least strategic method" of procurement. Instead, the DoD is encouraged to investigate using multi-year leases commercial satellite services and for procuring Government-owned payloads on commercial satellites. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics and DoD Chief Information Officer are directed to come up with an acquisition strategy by March 2014. Assuming this strategy evolves on pace it looks possible that the DoD could begin procuring additional commercial satellite services toward the end of the fiscal year or, possibly, early in fiscal 2015.

This brings us to Section 914 regarding Congress' demand that the DoD provide it with a "Space Control Mission Report." This report is expected to provide the following information:

- Identification of existing offensive and defensive space control systems, policies, and the technical possibilities of future systems
- Identification of any gaps or risks in existing space control system architecture and possibilities for improvement or mitigation of such gaps or risks (see above!)
- A description of existing and future sensor coverage and ground processing capabilities for space situational awareness
- An explanation of the extent to which all relevant and available information is being utilized for space situational awareness to detect, track, and identify objects in space
- A description of existing space situational awareness data sharing practices
- Plans for the future space control mission, including force levels and structure

These requirements force the DoD to explain to Congress what the current state of command and control capabilities are, where gaps and vulnerabilities in these exist, and where C2 is going in the future. This study may not lead the DoD to spend any money on space mission control systems in the near-term, but given the certainty that gaps will be uncovered, it could easily lead to spending down the road, so be sure to keep these potential requirements on your radar.