Center for Strategic and International Studies

Strategic National Security Space: FY19 Budget Forum

“Panel I: Viewpoints from the Congressional Leadership on Military Space”

Featuring:
Representative Mike Rogers (R-AL),
Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

Representative Jim Cooper (D-TN),
Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

Moderator:
Todd Harrison,
Director of the Aerospace Security and Defense Budget Analysis Projects, CSIS

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TODD HARRISON: All right. Well, good morning, everyone.

I’m Todd Harrison, a senior fellow here at CSIS. And as I’ve noted before, this is kind of the collision of my two worlds. So I am the director of the Aerospace Security Project here. I focus a lot on space security issues. I’m also the director of defense budget analysis, where I do analysis of the defense budget. So when the opportunity came to host this event, I thought, hey, this is perfect, right up my alley.

And I’m really pleased to have this morning as our opening panel two of the leading voices in Congress when it comes to the national security space. To my right here we have Representative Mike Rogers, who represents the Third District in Alabama – which includes Auburn University, we were talking about before. And Representative Rogers is the chairman of the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee, and has been leading the charge on issues of improving space resilience, space power, and reorganizing space within DOD.

And on the end here we have Representative Jim Cooper. He represents Tennessee’s Fifth Congressional District. He is the ranking member on the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee.

And, you know, it’s great to have both of you, to not only represent the bipartisan nature of a lot of space issues, but the two of you have worked very closely on a lot of space issues in Congress.

So to start out, Representative Rogers, I’ll got to you for some opening remarks.

REPRESENTATIVE MIKE ROGERS (R-AL): Well, first of all, thanks for having me here today. Appreciate it. And anytime we get the opportunity to talk about national security space and its importance, and our concern about making some modifications that get us into a better position than we are now.

I’m not going to get into – I was asked to talk a little bit about priorities, but I think that y’all want to spend most of the time on Q&A. So I’ll – I won’t give you my prepared remarks unless you just really want them. (Laughter.) But other than that, I’ll just say I’m glad to be here and look forward to your questions.

MR. HARRISON: Oh, and I should note before we go to you, Representative Cooper, we have a website where folks can ask questions. So if you take out your phone, you go to this web address, ask us a question electronically. So that works for people who are at home watching online, as well as people that are here in the room. Submit your question. I get to see is on the tablet up here at the front of the room, and I will ask it.

Representative Cooper?

REPRESENTATIVE JIM COOPER (D-TN): This is a historic moment because this is the first time the chairman has ever made a shorter speech than mine. (Laughter.) Normally I just say what he said, except for the “Roll Tide” part. (Laughter.) And he didn’t even say that today, so.

REP. ROGERS: I’m getting there.
REP. COOPER: But he only says that to make it harder to translate into Russian and Chinese. (Laughter.)

But I’m honored to be here. We couldn’t do this without the excellent staff work that we both receive. Leonor Tomero is here early in the morning, David Bate (ph) also. So we appreciate your great help and assistance.

This is at least a small example that Congress can work effectively together on a bipartisan basis. Now, we’re still working on bicameralism. Our Senate friends, in our opinion, were not as alert to the need for birthing a space corps as we were, but hopefully that will be corrected in a coming session.

There are so many important issues to talk about. Many of them are highly technical. We should probably allow more time for Q&A. So thank you, Todd, for convening us.

MR. HARRISON: Sure thing.

Well, so let’s start with Chairman Rogers. You know, with all of the things that are, you know, on the plate for DOD today, the threats we’re facing – you know, Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, continuing to battle terrorism in various parts of the world – when it comes to space, what do you think the priorities need to be for DOD right now when it comes to space programs?

REP. ROGERS: First, I think they’ve got to figure out how to move faster. We have really allowed ourselves to get mired down in bureaucracy when it comes to procuring capabilities to compete with our adversaries. It was jarring to our committee a little over a year ago to have John Hyten come in and tell us that China was our – if not our near peer, our peer in space, and Russia our near peer, and then have Admiral Haney tell us at PACOM not long after that no, they’re both our peers now. That’s unacceptable that we have allowed that to happen, particularly in a day and age when it is essential to have those space capabilities to fight and win wars. It wasn’t when we first went into Iraq and Iran – Iraq and Afghanistan 15 years ago, but now it’s a part of everyday life in fighting and winning wars. And we have allowed that capability to atrophy, while at the same time our adversaries have recognized it’s a vulnerability. So they have weaponized space, in the meantime, by the way, while we haven’t.

So these things really, you know, kind of shocked our conscience as we were looking at space a little over a year ago, and it made it – it gave us a sense of urgency to try to find a solution. The disappointing thing is that the more we looked at it, the more we became convinced that it can’t be fixed within the Air Force, the way it is structured now. And that’s what put us on the path to where we came with our mark that came out of the House last year.

MR. HARRISON: So, Representative Cooper, what are your thoughts?

REP. COOPER: Well, the community knows this. Forty years of relying on RD-180, a Russian launch vehicle. Unfilled billets at SMC for decades. So we blame our lagging space environment due to a poor school system in L.A.

Other things. Failure to promote within the space part of the Air Force. Test example this last time: out of 32 people becoming general, 30 fighter pilots and nobody on the space side until the
secretary of the Air Force, Heather Wilson, promoted a woman – which is great, but that’s at best a
token effort. You have to have a robust, aggressive, super-capable space contingent in whatever form.

And have had the R&D budget at a 30-year low recently. Thankfully, due to the efforts of this
Congress, finally we have budget certainty. Finally, we have a more robust budget.

But we need the Air Force still to get more organized, and the A11 wasn’t the right answer.
The PDSA was not the right answer. So hopefully the Air Force will come around and help us in
finding the right answer.

MR. HARRISON: And so I want to follow up, you know, on some of the initiatives that made
it into the FY ’18 NDAA. So you did give the Air Force some more authorities. Can you talk about
that a bit? You know, what authorities did you give? And how do you see the Air Force starting to
implement the changes that were mandated in the FY ’18 NDAA?

REP. ROGERS: It would be nice to know what they’re going to do. We gave them what they
asked for. You know, we told them we’re going to proceed with our efforts to start to develop a
segregated space corps within the Department of the Air Force. But they wanted the power to
organize, train and equip; we gave it to them. They wanted more money and budget certainty for two
years; they got it. So I’d like to see them here today to explain what they’re going to do with it. They
chose not to be here. But we’re still waiting to see what they’re going to do.

MR. HARRISON: Congressman Cooper?

REP. COOPER: You know, part of the
NDAA was to authorize a study from an outside
independent think tank as to exactly how it should be organized. We shouldn’t get mired down in the
details. Sadly, in some of our internal discussions, there is a focus on uniform design. Who cares?
(Laughter.) Who cares if our brilliant scientists have tattoos and body piercing? What matters is
capability. And here, our Air Force friends, we need to focus more on that.

And also speed of acquisition. Here we have an interesting control group situation with the
NRO, which generally with a flatter organizational structure has been able to perform much more
agilely and robustly. So why can’t the Air Force learn from them? We, instead, tend to be mired in
bureaucracy. And there are many strengths of bureaucracy, but we haven’t seen those in space yet.

REP. ROGERS: And Jim makes a great point. One of the main things that we would like to
see them do voluntarily is restructure and weed out some of the bureaucracy in their acquisition –
procurement and acquisition system. That was one of the glaring problem areas that we initially were
drawn to. And they’ve got a lot of latitude, but we haven’t seen them be able to make that change.
And that’s one of the problems we felt like in keeping national security space in the Air Force, is that
culturally they’re so indoctrinated to the way they do things that they can’t make themselves do it
differently. Whereas, I think if – once we have the space corps segregated, we can start with a clean
sheet on what that acquisition system will be like to make sure it doesn’t get blown up with
bureaucracy so that it can – it can be more agile.

You know, General Hyten talked about it at the Reagan Defense Forum last year, how
frustrated it was that it’s taking eight to 10 years to get new capabilities up in space when the private
sector’s doing it in 18 to 24 months, and that we need to stop putting up these big monstrous satellites
that have a lot of capability, but they’re also huge targets for our adversaries. We ought to be throwing
up a lot more frequent smaller satellites with more narrow capabilities, but collectively they still give us the same potential. But, again, I don’t think that the Air Force can culturally change the way it does things.

MR. HARRISON: And some of the ideas that have been thrown out there to help change the way the Air Force does space acquisitions, but also to help speed the pace of acquisitions. One is creating a separate acquisition workforce for space within the Air Force – people that are dedicated to space acquisitions, that are not generalists.

Another is maybe give some additional flexibility in the way money can be spent so they don’t have to wait for a two-year budget cycle. Because if you’re trying to innovate, you know, having to go through the whole PPBE process – you know, planning and programming money – it just takes too long. You’ll miss opportunities. So maybe something like a working capital fund for space innovation.

Are those kinds of changes that Congress would be open to or that you would like to see, things that the Air Force could do on its own?

REP. ROGERS: I’d be happy to – I would like for them to have proposed that a year ago instead of fighting us, and tell us what they’re going to do differently while we continue down this path. But those are wonderful ideas for them to start implementing while we’re creating a space corps.

REP. COOPER: The first challenge that Mike faced as chairman of the committee was clearing out the underbrush. And to have 60 bureaucrats able to say no, that makes it very difficult to get anything done. So that’s part of the process of making sure that positive decisions can be made.

REP. ROGERS: I’d also go back to this. Even if they made the structural changes that you described, which are good, the money is still the problem. What we have found in looking at this is that over the years the Air Force has used the space budget as a money pot to reach into and pull money out to subsidize the air dominance programs when they feel like Congress is not giving them enough for tankers or fighter jets or whatever, bombers. And, you know, they’re right; Congress has not given any of the services enough for their mission. But that doesn’t mean you starve to death one of your subordinate missions to fund your – what you perceive as your more dominant mission. And that’s caused a lot of the atrophy that we’ve seen in our national security space capabilities.

MR. HARRISON: So I’m going to go to a question here from the audience. I’m going to kind of break it into two parts.

So, you know, first part of this question is about, you know, clearly the two of you think that we need to be reorganizing into a separate space corps. What do you think is a realistic timeline for doing that? How long will it take? I mean, eventually people do have to wrestle with questions of, like the uniform and what are we going to call the ranks, because you’re not going to call them airmen if they’re in a space corps. You know, so there are some little questions like that that are notoriously, you know, controversial issues within the military if you want to change a uniform. But, you know, realistically, setting up a space corps, what do you think is a timeline that we ought to be on?

REP. ROGERS: Well, first let me go back to this uniform thing. I’m with Jim. That’s the silliest thing in the world. It’s the Air Force. Air Force got blue uniforms? Make the space corps
black. Everything else be the same, except instead of having wings you’ll have an orbit or something. I don’t care. Done. It’s over. (Laughter.)

MR. HARRISON: All right.

REP. ROGERS: You know, it’s just silly. They talk about these uniforms like that’s just a big reason not to deal with this national security space problem that we’ve got.

But having said that, we – I think three to five years, in short. And here’s the way we have progressed from last year. You all remember the bill that we came out of the House with would have required them to design the space corps this year, and then we would implement it after the next NDAA. It would automatically implement, but we’d have time to tinker with it, make some statutory changes based on what they designed this year.

Senate, as Jim has already pointed out, was not really as on top of this issue as the House was. And in fairness, we hadn’t been on top of it two years earlier either, so I can’t be too aggravated with them. But they were like, you know, this may not be a bad idea, may not be a good idea, but let’s slow down and design it first, and then come back with a statutory kick-in.

So the bill that we passed required the deputy secretary of defense to hire an FFRDC to basically design how do we set up a separate space service, what’s it going to look like, and what’s a reasonable timetable. So that’s – supposed to make that – (inaudible) – like next week, in fact, and then they’ve got until December to have a final product to present to Congress on what that’s going to look like and what they think the timetable is.

I personally think three to five years is the way to get it done without being too disruptive, because we have to keep using these assets while we’re in the – in the process. But, Jim, what are your thoughts?

REP. COOPER: Todd, when you ask about deadline, timeline, think about yesterday. You know, even the chairman’s answer, three to five years, we fought and won World War II in five years. Remember that our defense budget is really not set by us, it’s set by our adversaries. Our bureaucratic changes should not be determined at our convenience, but at what’s necessary.

So this is stunning that an aging and perhaps sclerotic power thinks of its own convenience ahead of everything else. We have got to get our heads in the game, think of warfighting in a new domain, and be ready for whatever threat comes at us. Because in case you don’t feel it in your gut, we could be deaf, dumb, and blind within seconds. No ATM would work. You couldn’t find how close you are to the green at golf, you know? (Laughter.) This is – this really strikes home, you know? (Laughter.)

MR. HARRISON: You wouldn’t be able to catch an Uber. (Laughter.)

REP. COOPER: This is – seldom has a great nation been so vulnerable. And we need a cherished service to rise to the challenge and take this as seriously as we do.

MR. HARRISON: So the second part of this question is about what can we do in the short term. And so in the next one/two/three years, what can we start to do not just about reorganization, but about meeting the important mission needs? And specifically this questioner asks, you know, what can
we do on space situational awareness and defensive counterspace? What more do you want to see the
department be doing?

REP. ROGERS: Come out of denial that we are in this situation that we’re in. You know, Jim
is right. There’s a lot you probably do know, but most of it’s classified. It is bad, the situation that we
are in as a nation, the vulnerabilities that we have to China and Russia. And I’d like to be able to – I’d
like for the American public to know more. I can’t because, you know, I don’t want to go to jail for
leaking classified information. But we’re in a really bad situation. So the first thing they could do is
just to come out of denial, admit we’ve got a problem and that we’ve got to fix it, and work with us
instead of fighting us.

You know, the Air Force has spent the last year on Capitol Hill fighting Congress, trying to
keep us from meddling in this issue. Well, you know, Congress wasn’t meddling in it, and that allowed
us to get in this situation. We have a job to do vigorous oversight. And if we find that any service is
not getting their job done, it’s our job to get after it. And so I want them to first start working
collaboratively with us toward some answers.

MR. HARRISON: Jim?

REP. COOPER: And there are many people in the Pentagon who I think in large part agree
with us. I’ve been particularly proud of Deputy Secretary of Defense Shanahan, who seems to totally
get it. Many other people get it, including people within the Air Force. So we just need the
bureaucracy, the brass, the official folks to get on board with enthusiasm and with speed and with
clarity. You know, I’m personally embarrassed that it takes the playthings of a couple billionaires to
help us improve and make our launch capability more affordable. It’s like, it shouldn’t happen that
way. The Air Force has had amazing budgets for a long time. They do a lot of things. And then they
end up being unenthusiastic about drones because they’re not piloted aircraft? Give me a break, you
know? I like leather jackets too, but that doesn’t – (laughter) – that shouldn’t be the predominant
characteristic. Historians will not be kind when they look back at this period. So let’s get on the right
side of history here. We have a chance. We have a window. Let’s not blow it.

MR. HARRISON: And I want to follow on something you said, Chairman Rogers, over-
classification – I guess that’s my word over-classification. But a lot of the threat information, the
vulnerabilities of our satellites but also what other countries are doing in space, is classified so people
don’t know about it and can’t talk about it. You know, do you think that ought to be something that
this administration addresses? Because ultimately, you know, the administration alone can choose
what is classified and what is not. Congress can’t choose to declassify something. So do you have any
ideas of how we can push to – you know, in a responsible way, of course – make more information
public, so people are aware of what’s going on?

REP. ROGERS: Yeah, I completely do think that we should be looking at declassifying a lot of
the stuff they now have classified, because the public really should know. Members of Congress
should know about a lot of the challenges that we face. And I don’t know why they over-classify. And
it’s not just unique to this space, the national security space. It’s across the board in all of our services,
I’ve found, but particularly in this committee. Jim and I, most of what we deal with is classified.

And it’s disturbing that we can’t let more people know, because there would be a hue and cry
from the American public for us to fix this situation if they knew how bad things were, and what we’ve
allowed China and Russia to do. But the only way I know to do – to make – get the administration to
push it, is to talk about it. You know, is just to express frustration. If any of you can get on cable TV, apparently the president watches that a lot. So you might want to say something about it. (Laughter.)

REP. COOPER: You know, historically Senate Daniel Patrick Moynihan warned us about the dangers of over-classification. His book is still worth reading. But remember, hey, we have a dedicated service whose responsibility is space. And they’re privy to all the secrets. And where has their leadership been? And, again, these are good people? They are dedicated, patriotic Americans. And right now as we speak, many of them couldn’t be in Washington because they’re at Maxwell Air Force Base in Mr. Rogers’ home state doing a war game. All I ask is that we win the war game and that – (laughter) – we win the real thing too, because victory has been in short supply for a long time. We need to see more of that, and think in those winning terms, and perform so that we’re at least as prepared as a Boy Scout troop, not unprepared.

MR. HARRISON: Another question from the audience is about commercial space systems. And so the military is heavily reliant on commercial space systems for a number of missions, not just communications but, you know, imagery as well, for example. And, you know, more and more, I think, in space situational awareness. Who is in charge, or who should be in charge, of integrating commercial space systems and services with our national security space systems?

REP. ROGERS: Chief of staff of the space corps. (Laughter.)

MR. HARRISON: Well, who do you think it is now, because it’s not clear?


REP. COOPER: And, in all fairness, we also need to be treating cyber as a separate domain as well. And the president’s on that case, apparently. There are lots of new things that we are all facing that we need to be more alert to. And we’ve had birthing pains in the past. People didn’t like it when the Army Air Corps separated out to create the Air Force in 1947. But let’s be more resilient. Let’s be more open to change, and constructive change. We can do this. This is America. We are the can-do, practical nation. We are not bound by ideology. We are not bound by structure. At least, we didn’t used to be. So let’s make it work now.

REP. ROGERS: Yeah, one thing I do want to point out. There was some misconceptions when we had our bill come out of the House last year, frankly when it was on the House floor, that we were talking about creating this brand-new bureaucracy out there that was going to be large and grow into a monster. We specifically put language in our bill saying they could acquire no more bases, no more buildings, that – no more people. That this was all about segregating existing personnel into a segregated service, the existing budget, into a segregated pot. This was not about growing a large and big bureaucracy. So as people, as y’all talk about it, think about this, I hope you’ll keep that in mind. And when people start saying: This is just going to be another monstrous bureaucracy, it’s not. This is just about making what we have more effective and capable and agile.

REP. COOPER: And, to be fair, we do need to fill those billets at the Space and Missile Command. Like, this is something the Air Force was aware of for well-over a decade. Where are the majors? Where are the captains? Where are the – it’s like, hello? You can’t even fill your own required positions on a systematic basis. Like, that should be a clear indication of a problem. And yet, somehow, the bureaucracy didn’t respond to that, or made excuses. And there also has to be some hope for promotion, because most people in the services want that.
MR. HARRISON: And the Air Force does talk a lot about pilot shortfall, not being able to fill up their pilot billets. And they’ve got a bonus program. I think if you sign up for a – like, more than a 10-year commitment as a pilot, you can get a bonus up to $5,000. So serious money.

REP. ROGERS: (Laughs.)

MR. HARRISON: Do you need something like that to help retain folks in the space profession in the military, in the Air Force in particular, to fill these billets?

REP. ROGERS: First, let me point out they’re talking about that when we’re in an era where we’re moving to pilotless airplanes. I mean, it’s not – this – you look at some of the stuff we’re using now, it’s drones. In the future, we’re not going to need a lot of pilots. But they’re in denial about that too, for the thing you just described.

But think about this, once we segregate the space professionals into a segregated service, how exciting that’s going to be for the young people who want to be in that environment. I think that you’re going to—you’re not going to have to be bonuses. There’s going to be a lot of young people in our best colleges and universities who are going to be gravitated to want to work in that kind of environment.

But, yeah, now once you’ve got them there – that’s one of the things that Jim made reference to – you’ve got to give them opportunity and culturally develop them and educationally develop them in that service. And, you know, you want to retain them once you’ve invested in them. And I think bonuses are a good way to keep the best and brightest, because private sector offers a lot of money. But as far a recruitment, I think that you’re going to find this to be a magnet for the best and brightest. Because, just face it, space is cool. (Laughter.)

REP. COOPER: I think we should focus on whatever works, what’s necessary because we should be very proud of our all-volunteer service. And in certain areas, we need to attract and keep more of these wonderful and wonderfully talented volunteers. But remember, when you’re talking about piloted aircraft, our showpiece new bird is the F-35. And look at the Pentagon’s now official opinion about that. And unaffordable weapon system. So it’s not just a shortage of pilots. It’s a shortage of affordable aircraft. And we haven’t even fielded the long-range bomber yet, or things like that that we need to do.

So there seems to be a critical problem in the Air Force about its core mission. And I’m not even talking space here. I’m talking piloted aircraft. So we’ve got to fix, you know, various problems. We’re – bearing in mind these are all good people – but it’s – academics would call it a collective action problem. Somehow the whole needs to be greater than the sum of the parts.

MR. HARRISON: I did not intend for this panel to be all about the space corps, but the questions keep coming in about space corps. (Laughs.) So one more. So the next question here is basically that the space corps, as proposed in legislation last year, really only tackled Air Force space. But of course, national security space encompasses a lot more, NRO. And there are space components and significant space organizations in both the Navy and the Army. So, you know, what’s your long-term vision? Do we need to integrate all of those things together in a space department? Or is it OK to keep space components in each of the services and the NRO?
REP. ROGERS: The main reason we dealt with the Air Force only is because that’s where 90 percent of national security space is. I mean, the Navy has the MUOS system, I believe. And I talked with Admiral Richardson and they said — you know, I asked him. I said, if we try to pull it in are you going to have a big problem. And he said, well, you know, we’d like to keep it, but I won’t fight about it. You know, and Army SMDC has a narrow mission. But the bulk of the problem was in the Air Force.

And frankly, this is as candid as I can be, we didn’t want any more political pushback than we were going to get already that if we kept that — you know, while the Navy wasn’t going to be a problem. I don’t know, the Army might have been. And I can guarantee the IC would have been if we had messed with the NRO. So — and plus, the NRO is not as broken. I mean, they’re doing a pretty good job. So there’s no reason to really tinker with it.

So we dealt with where the problem was. Now, getting back to the theme of your larger question, ultimately I can see both the Navy mission and the Army mission being folded into a space force, years down the road. That would make sense. Whether or not it would also make sense at some other developmental stage to fold the intelligence capabilities in there, I don’t know. That’s way down the road, as far as I’m concerned.

REP. COOPER: Todd, as you know, ever since Goldwater-Nichols — which was unanimously opposed by the Pentagon — we have tried to be more joint. And it’s worked remarkably well. We can be joint on this as well, preserving the equities of each service while we collaboratively work more effectively together.

And I wanted to bring up a side point that hasn’t been mentioned so far. There are some activities today of national security space that could be offloaded into the civilian sector, when you’re talking about air traffic control in space. You know, that is a very valuable planetary function that the Air Force has been performing miraculously well. But arguably, it should be offloaded to a trusted civilian or neutral or even international agency that can police space accidents, because they do happen. And people need to know with authority whether it’s benign or malign. And things like that need to be figured out. And the Air Force is in the process right now of figuring out the best way to handle things like that.

REP. ROGERS: And Jim makes a great point. Y’all are probably all aware that we’ve got SpaceX talking about throwing up a few thousand satellites for a broadband capability. Boeing’s talking about doing it. India has got a company talking about doing it. We could, in the not too distant future, have a hundred thousand of these smaller constellation — or, I mean, satellites in these smaller constellations, but providing broadband capability.

This traffic issue he’s talking about is going to become more and more complex. And one of the problems that we have is that if we’re going to be the traffic cop and figure all this out, why should we be paying for everybody else to have these constellations? Why should the American government be paying for China or Russia or India to have broadband constellations without them paying for it. So that’s another issue we’re going to have to grapple with. If we’re going to—if there’s going to be a traffic cop that’s us, somebody else is going to have to help pay for it.

MR. HARRISON: So, turning to some specific programmatic questions, one of the questions from the audience here is about GPS OCX, the ground segment part of a GPS system. That program has had a lot of scheduled delays, some cost overruns. You know, do you want to see the Air Force...
make more changes to try to reform that program? Or do we just need to let it stabilize and try to execute on the current program of record?

REP. ROGERS: That program is a perfect example of the problem we have in the Air Force. We’ve had that black hole for money for years, and it’s still not able to be executed. And show me the person responsible for that. You can’t. It’s all those committees. They’re all pointing at each other. It’s not me, it’s them. It’s not me, it’s them. In the meantime, we still don’t have the capability and we don’t see an end in sight. And this thing has been incredibly overbudget. I want to have somebody who owns that, and give them the power to fix it, and the time. But the Air Force won’t do that. But, no, I think we need to go – we need to get it right. I don’t think we should just stop with what it can do right now. But I don’t see that happening. I’ve been so disappointed in that program.

REP. COOPER: I think properly understood, the Constitution makes Congress a board of directors. We shouldn’t micro manage. We should look at the big policy decisions and then let capable services implement them. But this is a situation that really is a nightmare – to have satellite capability and no ground communications for over a decade, and really no hope in sight – and with no accountability? This would never stand for a second in the corporate world. And the corporate world is not perfect, but at least there tends to be accountability. So –

REP. ROGERS: So when y’all think that we’re being too rough on them, think about this program. I mean, this is our job, to be rough on whoever’s got responsibility for that when it’s not getting done year after year after year. So it’s not that we’re hateful people. It’s just –

REP. COOPER: Well, you might be. (Laughter.)

MR. HARRISON: Well, so, let me follow up with a broader question here. Both of you have mentioned that you – there’s a need for space acquisitions to go faster. Can you name specific programs or mission areas where you think that the Air Force or other services could accelerate what they’re trying to do?

REP. ROGERS: That was one, but a replacement for SBIRS. We need – that’s one of the things John Hyten talked about, that they’re saying it could be eight to 10 years, that was the program he was talking about. Anybody who knows what SBIRS number-one mission is knows that’s really important for us to get right. And we’ve got to detect an adversary launching an ICBM at us. The private sector could fix this, if you put, you know, somebody—a CEO in charge of that. Why can’t the Air Force? I don’t know the answer.

MR. HARRISON: And then the FY ’19 budget, it does appear that they’re trying to accelerate that program. You know, any comments on that, or thoughts on that?

REP. COOPER: You kind of wonder what’s connected to what, because the money is usually there. In large part, we usually accede to whatever the military request is, as best we can. Now, there was a terrible problem with sequestration, but that’s been temporarily cured. I think the real answer to your question is three letters – NRO. You know, it’s kind of amazing the difference in capability and speed of acquisition and lateral organizational design and accountability. And it’s not perfect, but very rarely in bureaucracy do you have a control group that you can point to.

So there have got to be ways to solve these problems. We’re not experts, but you get the feeling that in the old days the program managers had real pride. Some people refused a promotion
because they were so invested in the program, and really did a superb job, and they were technically capable, and they really weren’t contractor-driven. They knew what they were doing. That seems to have been lost. And I have to question – because in many ways I admire Navy accountability for things. People put in charge of reactors are there for six or eight years and do a great job. And you know where the buck stops. Some of the other services have not shared that organizational design. And if the Navy can do it, why can’t other services do it?

MR. HARRISON: So another question from the audience here is, you know, if you look in the FY ’19 budget request overall, it looks like space funding is starting to go up. Is that the Air Force sending a strong message that they are prioritizing space and they’re coming around? Or do you think they still need to do more?

REP. ROGERS: They need to do a lot more, but I think that’s the Air Force trying to get us to leave them alone. (Laughter.)

MR. HARRISON: Is it going to work?

REP. ROGERS: No. (Laughter.)

MR. HARRISON: Any other thoughts on that?

REP. COOPER: Ditto. (Laughter.)

MR. HARRISON: All right. So another question is, you know, given budget realities and the need to – you know, you never have infinite resources, right? So it’s always finite in some respect. So you do have to balance at some level funding that goes into innovative new technologies versus funding that’s needed to just maintain the systems that we’ve got and the capabilities that we have today. You know, how do you think we should strike that balance? You know, are we leaning too much towards maintaining existing systems, not enough towards innovation? You know, if you want to do more in both, where should the cuts come from to pay for it?

REP. ROGERS: I would say we have to do more in innovation, particularly in counterspace capabilities. And I think there is a – some more aggressive activity going on, that we can’t talk about in this room right now, to deal with the threats from China in particular, and Russia. But we have to be a lot more innovative, and I mean fast.

REP. ROGERS: Todd, when you say that we don’t have infinite resources, that’s of course true in a mathematically sense. But is there any other power on Earth that wouldn’t fight, bleed, and die to have our budgets? And yet, we squander so much of what we have. So we have to learn how to be more efficient with what we are spending. And of course, no one wants to do that. So I’m worried that when we use phrases like that – of course, we don’t have infinite budgets – that’s kind of an aging superpower starting to make excuses.

And to me, most innovation is science-driven. Well, who can predict what scientists will discover? And I just hope enough of them are in DARPA or related fields right now, so that we do have a big head start. Because when most every chip on the planet is made in a rival nation, when a lot of this is almost impossible even for artificial intelligence to begin to figure out, when there are lots of other things happening technically, we better be ahead. And I worry that as a nation we not only bad-mouth science, we underinvest in science. And we don’t let scientists be scientists. So we really got to
focus on that. And I’m worried that increasingly, as all elites are challenged, that we have hurt our scientific community, and hurt them within the services.

REP. ROGERS: Yeah, I would – I would like to make one point that we haven’t talked about, and that is, you know, at a time when you’ve seen Congress for years be completely partisan and marred down in conflict, when it’s come to national security space you haven’t seen – I mean, me and Jim, as y’all can tell, we’re good friends. But our committee – it came out of our subcommittee unanimously, the mark last year. It came out of the full committee, 66 members, there were only three people who verbally voted no. This is not – there’s no partisanship. And it came out of the House in a huge vote.

So while you see a lot of, you know, yakking up there and pointing fingers, when it’s come to this issue it has not been the case. And that should tell you a lot, those people who are paying attention, how serious this problem is, and now sobering the Congress is taking it. This is not partisan in any way.

MR. HARRISON: Well, so I want to pull on that thread a bit. So, you know, in the NDAA last year, the House passed the space corps provision; the Senate didn’t. And the Senate, at least initially in their bill, they went in a very different direction, basically creating a little office in OSD that would do cyber and space. They didn’t seem, and especially Chairman McCain, didn’t seem to be on the same page. Have you guys had a lot of discussion since then? Do you see the Senate moving more towards you or you moving towards them? How is that going?

REP. ROGERS: I’d go back to my comment earlier. In fairness, the Senate Armed Services Committee hadn’t been focused on this, and I couldn’t beat them up because two years earlier we hadn’t been. This really, you know, kind of kicked us in the face pretty quick and got our attention when we started working on it.

So, you know, when they saw this, they weren’t saying, oh, that’s a terrible idea. They were like, this is a real – a big thing real fast – (laughs) – slow down. And then some of the language you saw, that was the Air Force politicking over there trying to find a way to kill this.

We view – now that this issue has been raised legislatively with the Senate, they’re taking this year to kind of immerse themselves in this. One of the things that we’re hoping, this FFRDC study will help them get to understand how we can fix this problem. But they are in this year, I think, becoming much more familiar with how bad things are, just like we went through that evolutionary period. So I think that you’re going to find this year is going to be – they’re going to be becoming much more familiar and I hope moving more to the position of doing something in the vein of what the House proposed.

REP. COOPER: I think we’re both huge fans – and who isn’t? – of Senator McCain, Senator Nelson. These are heroic figures. But remember, being senator is a lot tougher job than ours. We look after 700,000 people apiece. They look after entire states, and some of those states are pretty darn large. And they have too many committee assignments. They’re on four major committees, and they’re torn in a thousand different directions. So we’ve had more time to spend with some of the briefs and to focus on this issue. So I think when they get the time to do that, you’re going to see them substantially agreeing with us.
MR. HARRISON: So I got more of a process/technical question here. So in the FY ’17 NDAA – so the one before last – the NDAA mandated two studies be done on space organization, one by OMB, one by DOD. And they were supposed to be submitted six months after the NDAA passed, so that would have been in June of last year. As far as I can tell, neither OMB or DOD submitted those reports on time. I think OMB submitted theirs back in December. I don’t know if DOD ever submitted theirs.

REP. ROGERS: Correct.

MR. HARRISON: Now, in the FY ’18 NDAA, it has the reporting requirement of this independent FFRDC study. It is due by December of this year. Do you think they’re going to meet that deadline? And what would be the consequences if they don’t?

REP. ROGERS: Absolutely. And the reason why we feel confident is, specifically because of the history you described, we gave it to Deputy Secretary Shanahan. He’s a corporate guy. He has our confidence. He gets it. He wants to fix it. And we have been staying in regular contact with him on this, and we are going to stay in regular contact with him. I have every confidence in Deputy Secretary Shanahan and his ability to get this done, and I expect it to be on time and productive.

REP. COOPER: I would encourage you to go back and look at the 9/11 Commission Report. Their central conclusion was that we had a failure of imagination. We did not connect the dots. There were plenty of warning signs. Here we cannot afford to have a failure of imagination.

And so many think tanks, they want an acceptable report, a popular report with the services. They don’t want to break too much china. Here we need to be as imaginative as we need to be.

And I think there are plenty of warning signs. It’s our bad if we don’t respond appropriately.

MR. HARRISON: So I want to end here. We’re almost out of time. I want to end on a positive note, all right?

REP. ROGERS: Are we talking football? (Laughter.)

MR. HARRISON: I don’t know. That could get controversial. (Laughter.) We don’t want any controversy here.

So, you know, what do you see that the Air Force is doing right? What positive steps do you see the Air Force taking, and DOD at large, when it comes to national security space?

REP. ROGERS: I have been pleased to see them – you know, we changed the Air Force command position that Jay Raymond has to a six-year tenure, and I’ve seen them start to vest him with more authorities. And I think that’s a – that’s a good – a good move on their part. I just hope they continue to do that.

REP. COOPER: The personnel in the Air Force is some of the finest in America or in the world. We just need to let them live up to their full potential in whatever their field of expertise. If they want to be fighter pilots, great. If they want to be space people, great. And the many other activities, because the Air Force has one of the broader portfolios of any service. It’s an amazing,
amazing institution. But we need to allow all of them to grow to their full potential, and I think the space corps would help them do that.

    MR. HARRISON: All right. Please join me in thanking Representative Rogers and Cooper.

    REP. ROGERS: Thank you. (Applause.)

    REP. COOPER: Thank you. (Applause.)

    (END)