

Haileybury MUN

Research report



General Assembly 1: Disarmament and International Security
The question of militarisation in space
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Definitions:

'Militarisation'

The act of assembling and putting into readiness for war or other emergency: "mobilization of the troops"

'militarisation of space'

Is the placement and development of weaponry and military technology in outer space.

Introduction

The early exploration of space in the mid-20th century had, in part, a military motivation, as the United States and the Soviet Union used it as an opportunity to demonstrate ballistic missile technology and other technologies having the potential for military application. As yet, however, weapons are not known to have been stationed in space, with the exception of the Almaz space station and the TP-82 Cosmonaut survival pistol (for post-landing, pre-recovery use).

An application of space militarisation currently in use is GPS or Global Positioning System. This satellite navigation system is used for determining one's precise location and providing a highly accurate time reference almost anywhere on Earth or in Earth orbit. It uses an intermediate circular orbit (ICO) satellite constellation of at least 24 satellites. The GPS system was designed by and is controlled by the United States Department of Defense and can be used by anyone, free of charge. The cost of maintaining the system is approximately US\$400 million per year, including the replacement of ageing satellites.

Another current application of militarisation of space can be demonstrated by the emerging military doctrine of network-centric warfare. Network-centric warfare relies heavily on the use of high speed communications which allows all soldiers and branches of the military to view the battlefield in real-time. Real-time technology improves the situational awareness of all of the military's assets and commanders in a given theatre.

Background

During the Cold War, the world's two great superpowers — the Soviet Union and the United States of America — spent large proportions of their GDP on developing military technologies. The drive to place objects in orbit stimulated space research and started the Space Race. In 1957, the USSR launched the first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1. By the end of the 1960s, both countries regularly deployed satellites.

In the late 1950s United States Air Force considered detonating an atomic bomb on the Moon to display U.S. superiority to the Soviet Union and the rest of the world (Project A119). In 1959, a feasibility study of a

possible military base on the Moon ([Project Horizon](#)) was conducted. In 1958, a plan for a 21-airman underground Air Force base on the Moon by 1968 was developed ([Lunex Project](#)).

The [Safeguard Program](#) was deployed in the mid-1970s. The ABM treaty only allowed for construction of a single ABM facility to protect either the nation's capital city or an ICBM field. The one they built in North Dakota was only operational as an ABM facility for less than a year, the Perimeter Acquisition Radar (PAR), one of Safeguard's components, was still operational as of 2005. One major problem with the Safeguard Program, and past ABM systems, was that the interceptor missiles required nuclear warheads to destroy incoming ICBMs. Future ABMs will likely be more accurate and use [hit-to-kill](#) or conventional warheads to knock down incoming warheads. The technology involved in such systems was shaky at best, and deployment was limited by the [ABM treaty](#) of 1972.

The R-36ORB was a [Soviet ICBM](#) in the 1960s that, once launched, would go into a [low Earth orbit](#) whereupon it would de-orbit for an attack. This system would approach North America over the [South Pole](#), thereby striking targets from the opposite direction from that to which [NORAD](#) early warning systems are oriented. The missile was phased out in January 1983 in compliance with the [SALT II](#) treaty.

Space Treaties:

The Outer Space Treaties:

The Outer Space Treaty was considered by the Legal Subcommittee in 1966. Later that year, agreement was reached in the General Assembly. The treaty included the following principles:

- the exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries and shall be the province of all mankind;
- outer space shall be free for exploration and use by all States;
- outer space is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means;
- States shall not place nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies or station them in outer space in any other manner;
- the Moon and other celestial bodies shall be used exclusively for peaceful purposes;
- Astronauts shall be regarded as the envoys of mankind;
- States shall be responsible for national space activities whether carried out by governmental or non-governmental activities;
- States shall be liable for damage caused by their space objects; and
- States shall avoid harmful contamination of space and celestial bodies.

In summary, the treaty initiated the banning of signatories' placing of [nuclear weapons](#) or any other [weapons of mass destruction](#) in orbit of [Earth](#), installing them on the [moon](#) or any other [celestial body](#), or to otherwise station them in [outer space](#). The United States, the [United Kingdom](#), and the Soviet Union signed the treaty and it entered into effect on October 10, 1967. As of January 1, 2005, 98 States have ratified, and an additional 27 have signed the Outer Space Treaty.

Note that this treaty does not ban the placement of weapons in space in general, only nuclear weapons and WMD.

Space Preservation Treaty:

The Space Preservation Treaty was a proposed 2006 UN General Assembly resolution against all space weapons. Only the United States of America voted against the treaty, with Israel abstaining.

In February 2008, China and Russia together submitted a draft to the UN known as the *Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects* (PPWT).

The first resolution, *Prevention of an arms race in outer space*, "call[s] on all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the peaceful use of outer space, prevent an arms race there, and refrain from actions contrary to that objective."

The second resolution, *No first placement of weapons in outer space*, which emphasises the prevention of an arms race in space and that "other measures could contribute to ensuring that weapons were not placed in outer space."

National Missile Defence:

With the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War defence spending was reduced and space research was chiefly focused on peaceful research. American military research is focused on a more modest goal of preventing the United States from being subject to [nuclear blackmail](#) or nuclear terrorism by a [rogue state](#).

On 16 December 2002, US President [George W. Bush](#) signed National Security Presidential Directive which outlined a plan to begin deployment of operational ballistic missile defence systems by 2004. The projected cost of the programme for the years 2004 to 2009 was 53 billion US dollars.

Useful Links

<https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/russia/r-36o.htm> - More on the use by the Soviet Union

<http://thespacereview.com/article/3543/1> - More on the international space law

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/69/militarization-and-weaponization-of-outer-space>

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/gaspd240.doc.htm> - What the actual UN had to say about it in 2002

<https://www.ucsusa.org/nuclear-weapons/space-weapons/international-legal-agreements>

<https://spacenews.com/commentary-why-the-u-s-should-be-a-leader-in-space-weaponization/>