



AFPC Capitol Hill Briefing: “Understanding the New Space Race”

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Related Categories: Science and Technology; SPACE; NASA

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In October 2020, the American Foreign Policy Council launched a new Space Policy Initiative, co-directed by Defense Technology Program Director Richard M. Harrison and AFPC Senior Fellow in Defense Studies Peter Garretson. The new initiative will explore numerous facets of space policy, beginning with the burgeoning space race now underway between the United States and China.

The Initiative's inaugural event, held on October 22nd, was a virtual Hill briefing for Congressional staffers entitled Understanding the New Space Race. Richard Harrison served as the host of the event, whose panelists included: Gen. Steven J. “Bucky” Butow, the Space Portfolio Director of the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) of the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Research & Engineering; AFPC Senior Fellow for National Security Dr. Lamont Colucci, and; Dr. Larry Wortzel, AFPC Senior Fellow in Asian Security and a Member of the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission.

In his remarks, Dr. Wortzel outlined how the national space strategy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is advancing in ways that severely impact American economic and military security. He specifically detailed how, in addition to developing offensive space weapons, the PRC is using space to bolster its One Belt One Road initiative. He outlined how China's space roadmap entails asteroid mining, nuclear-powered shuttles for space exploration, and industrialization of the Moon to fabricate satellites that can harness energy in space. Dr. Colucci added context, describing how the Chinese are exploiting a global space market poised to grow from \$350 billion annually today to trillions in value over the next three decades. And he explained that with advancements in technology and a clear government vision, it may be possible to reach and even surpass the multi-trillion-dollar estimates now being projected for the space economy by strategically investing in the development of nascent industries, including mining asteroids, harnessing energy from space-based solar power, space-based manufacturing, and space tourism, among many others. Gen. Butow concluded by discussing the findings in the recently released State of Space Industrial Base 2020 report (SIB2020). The study, co-developed by the U.S. Space Force, the DIU and the Air Force Research Laboratory, had high level participation from the Pentagon, NASA, the private sector, and academia. It concluded that the U.S. needs a “North Star” vision for space—a whole of government response carried out in coordination with allied nations and private sector partnerships to counter the Chinese strategic space threat and to realize the great benefits that space has to offer.