



LANDPOWER ESSAY SERIES



No. 94-10

October 1994

THE ARMY IN SPACE

by

General Frederick J. Kroesen, USA (Ret.)

Fighting wars on the land, where the ultimate determination of winning and losing occurs, does not seem to demand an Army presence in space or the Army's use of space vehicles. But there are good and sufficient reasons to show that Army requirements particularly in wartime, demand that space be acknowledged as a joint arena, one to be manned by all services, responding to the needs of all components. Space activities cannot be relegated to support status where an outside agency furnishes a product in response to requests from commanders in the field.

Modern technology has made available a wealth of systems that transcend the areas of interest of all unified commands and their components. This is especially true in the fields of intelligence, communications and logistics, and it has a major influence on operations and fire support. The potential of satellites and space stations to contribute directly to mission accomplishment by even the smallest Joint Task Force commander requires a direct linkage between him and the supporting platforms. In practical terms that means that a field commander must be able to task, directly through his own agent, an intelligence collector, a logistics monitor or a communications link. With space technology the commander can "see deeper," can observe enemy activities as they occur and can monitor the execution of his own operations as they are happening. These are basic needs never best satisfied by an agency directed to support or to cooperate or to allocate among competing demands.

Specifically, a land force commander needs space-based means for the following:

1. Tactical surveillance of enemy dispositions and movements.
2. Communications beyond line-of-sight that can build then modify needed voice and data networks when tactical operations result in force reorganizations.

Landpower Essay Series is published by the AUSA Institute of Land Warfare. The series is designed to provide an outlet for original essays on topics that will stimulate professional discussion and further public understanding of the landpower aspects of national security. The content represents the personal opinions of the author and not necessarily the position of the Association of the United States Army or its members. Candidate essays of 2000 words or less may be submitted: Association of the United States Army, Institute of Land Warfare (Attn: Landpower Essay Series), 2425 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22201.

3. Monitoring his own forces operations, providing him with more rapid maneuver control and reaction capabilities.
4. Early warning against air, rockets and missiles targeted against his operation.
5. Target acquisition for his own air and long-range missiles.
6. Monitoring logistical operations to provide management information that will assure constant, continuing resupply, avoid bottlenecks and dangerous concentrations of stock piles, and accelerate activities in response to enemy actions.

The alternative to a Joint Space Command is a Defense Space Agency or the assignment of space activities to a single military service, one that would act as an executive agent for the Defense Department. In practice, neither of the alternatives has ever proved satisfactory over a long period. The Defense Logistics Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, in the long term, have added a layer of bureaucracy but have not truly improved service to the military departments or, more significantly, to the forces in the field. The services have all retained a large part of the systems that were to have been eliminated or reduced in size, because, in normal priority, Defense agencies serve the Defense Department first, then the services.

On occasion, the assignment of a function to a single service has temporarily satisfied a requirement. For the most part, however, time proves that the services being supported by an executive agent are dissatisfied with the service, object to the priorities extant and make modifications to satisfy their own needs. As one example, for many years the Army maintained engineer construction battalions to provide wartime airfield construction and repair service for the Air Force. Over time, the Air Force perceived that the Army did not prepare properly for the role, would not perform it adequately and was apt to divert these battalions to other missions. The result was USAF activation of their own "Red Horse" engineer battalions, specially equipped for airfield work.

Joint commands have a more impressive record. The Joint Transportation Command, Special Operations Command and the various area Unified Commands, in furtherance of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, enjoy the full support of their components and of Congress. The success of these commands, currently enjoyed by the Joint Space Command as well, argues for the continuation of the status quo. The Army role in space will continue to justify the existence of an Army component of this command.

###

(General Kroesen is an AUSA Senior Fellow.)