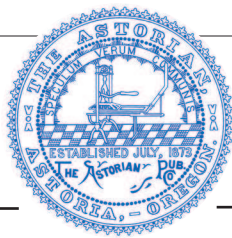


OPINION

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Bill Ingalls/NASA

A Delta IV rocket carrying the Parker Solar Probe lifts off Sunday from the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. The probe will venture closer to the sun than any other spacecraft.

Is the proposed **Space Force** really necessary to our defense?

PRO: New service, done right, will move US ahead

WASHINGTON — There is an honest debate to be had over whether the United States needs a separate armed service that's focused on space. But



James Jay Carafano

President Donald Trump's critics are having none of it. Instead, they have responded to the very notion of a Space Force with dismissive ridicule, suggesting that he wants a corps of ray-gun equipped Buzz Lightyears shouting: "To infinity and beyond!"

That's not what he wants, and the concept deserves to be treated quite seriously. A Space Force, done right, could be well worth having.

No one doubts that Americans — civilians as well as military personnel — are heavily dependent on what we have in space.

Assets "up there" do everything from make the internet work to detect the flight path of ballistic missiles. Our space-based assets inform our weather forecasts and help guide us to our destinations with GPS.

Just as there is no doubt about our reliance on the things we've put in space, so there is no doubt that these valuable assets are vulnerable to everything from cyberattacks to satellites being shot down by hostile powers. And no serious analyst questions the growing capability of Russia and China to wage war in space.

One more consideration: It's getting crowded up there. Space is becoming increasingly accessible to an increasing number of nations — and even some non-state actors.

The honest debate we need to have is whether it makes sense to redesign the government's byzantine space-program organizational chart so that control of the acquisition, deployment and operation of space assets is consolidated under an independent military service?

To be honest, there are good arguments for both sides of the question.

One key consideration is "opportunity costs." Are the time, effort and resources required to pluck the various space-related programs from the other services — and some civilian agencies — worth the bene-

fits to be gained by consolidation? It's a fifty-fifty proposition, but there are some good reasons to argue this is a good idea.

Space is a physical warfighting domain. Just as troops spar across foxholes, ships clash on the high seas and jets stage dogfights, military assets will physically compete in outer space.

For thousands of years, military wisdom has held that if you want to fight and win in a physical domain, you ought to have a core of professionals who are schooled, experienced and expert in that domain.

If there is logic in having domain-specific air, space and sea services, there is logic in having a space service.

A space force also offers the opportunity to rationalize management of all the military and intelligence assets the U.S. has and to synchronize that with our civilian programs.

The third and perhaps most important argument is that this will send a powerful and unmistakable message to the world that American intends to be a world-class space power — for a long time. It's time for America to think big again — to step ahead rather than watch others catch up.

In the '60s and '70s, Americans were fired up by the imaginative possibilities of what the U.S. might do in space.

The fact that so many mockers are not fired up by the notion of a Space Force suggests the time is more than right for this initiative. Americans need to dream again about owning the stars.

If Trump gets this right, we won't see a war of the satellites. What we will see is America leading the way to ensure that the freedom of the commons extends from the seas to space itself.

That's a vision worth reaching for. Now that President Trump has made the decision to step out, Americans should stop closing their eyes to the possibilities in the heavens. Instead, they ought to be discussing how best to look upward.

A Heritage Foundation press release, James Jay Carafano directs the think tank's research into issues of national security and foreign affairs.

CON: It's another Trump idea that belongs on a Hollywood launch pad

WASHINGTON — Throughout the history of the republic, American presidents have come up with some rather cockamamie ideas and programs.



Wayne Madsen

Gerald Ford's "WIN" buttons — "Whip Inflation Now" — come to mind. And there was Richard Nixon's outfitting Secret Service guards at the White House in Prussian-style ceremonial uniforms. That silliness did not last very long.

Harry Truman and George H.W. Bush constructed horseshoe pitches on the White House grounds. Both were removed by their successors because neither Dwight Eisenhower nor Bill Clinton was into tossing horseshoes. Although some money was spent on these presidential follies, none come even close in cost or absurdity as Donald Trump's creation of a U.S. Space Force.

Not only was the Space Force unwanted by Secretary of Defense James Mattis and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but immediately, the Trump 2020 re-election campaign announced an online vote on a logo for the Space Force, which coincided with selling Space Force merchandise to fund the campaign. A former White House Ethics Office director cried foul about merchandising Space Force items for Trump's re-election. That in itself deserves a belly laugh. When did Trump and his cronies ever pay attention to ethics?

In 2017, Mattis, in a letter to Senate Armed Forces Committee chairman John McCain, stated his opposition to a space force. Mattis wrote that such an additional military service would create "additional organizational layers at a time when we are focused on reducing overhead and integrating joint warfighting efforts."

Trump, whose only experience in uniform was "playing army" at a private military school in New York, would have none of it. Mattis and the generals and admirals were overruled by the president. The Space Force was to be formed and the military brass would just have to learn to like it. It appears that the only officials

who boost the Space Force are Trump and his sycophantic vice president, Mike Pence.

Funding for the Space Force did not even make it into the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2019.

The U.S. Air Force — which has had responsibility for space defense ever since the days of Ronald Reagan's own stroll down "dumb idea lane" with the "Star Wars" anti-ballistic missile system — is fuming over the creation of the Space Force, seeing it as a professional slap in the face.

While Trump sees space as the next battlefield for U.S. "star troopers," American and foreign diplomats are alarmed. They point to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, signed by the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom during the height of the Cold War.

This treaty specifies that space and celestial bodies, including the moon, Mars and the asteroids, are to be explored and exploited by the treaty signatories for peaceful purposes only.

Signatories agreed "not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction nor install such weapons on celestial bodies or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner."

The 1967 treaty ushered into being an entirely new legal construct, known as space law, which deals with everything from orbiting man-made satellites to potential mining on the moon and asteroids.

Trump's Space Force upends the treaty, the legal structure that surrounds it, and portends a future of military confrontation, not cooperation, among our planet's nations in outer space.

As millions of Americans go without health and nursing home care and as repairs to the country's crumbling infrastructure are sorely needed, now is not the time to invest in some campy sci-fi movie extravagance like the Space Force. It should be tossed into the presidential trash heap, along with Ford's WIN buttons, Nixon's Prussian uniforms and Truman's and Bush's horseshoes.

Wayne Madsen is a progressive commentator whose writings have appeared in U.S. and European newspapers.

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