

Subject: Read Ahead for 21 Jul, 2020 discussion on excessive secrecy in our national security space programs

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Problem: General [Raymond](#), former Secretary [Wilson](#), General [Hyten](#), [Dennis Bair](#) and [Robert Work](#) have all recently complained about how excessive secrecy is jeopardizing achieving America's military space objective. Blair and Work's most recent oped of two days [ago](#) (attached below) comes closest to identifying the problems excessive secrecy creates for our military space efforts but, to date, civilians in DOD have pushed back against reasonable requests to reform our security clearance policies. There are two classes of problems excessive secrecy is producing. The first class is harming timely hiring, contracting, acquisition, information sharing with contractors and allies, and the release of information for essential public policy and diplomacy. This class of problems requires reducing the level of classification (and, in some cases, totally declassifying information) to allow a wider sharing of information. The second class of problems is America's most sensitive special access programs relating to space are kept so secret and compartmentalized that only the most senior officials know about them. As a result, folks at the working level may not even be aware that their own planning and programs would be improved by the capabilities within a related compartmented program. There also is a risk of costly, unnecessary duplication of effort. With regard to both classes of problems, what Congress lacks and needs to accomplish its constitutional duty of oversight is to get specifics, i.e., actual horror stories. Finally, the lack of critical review inherent in highly classified, often compartmentalized programs can and does result in expensive failures and proceeding down unpromising paths. The telling of such tales, however, is risky to a. Our national security and b. Peoples' careers and contracts. Blair and Work recommend creating a commission. This may gain support but alone may prove to be insufficient. In any case it would take at least two years to produce any findings.

Remedy: Take two steps. To gain greater fidelity on the first class of problems excessive secrecy causes, pass a law noting the complaints above and require the National Space Defense Center to create a hotline that would take anonymous tips (i.e., specific case complaints) about how excessive

secrecy is harming timely hiring, contracting, acquisition, information sharing with contractors and allies, and the release of information for essential public policy and diplomacy. The Center would be required to validate as many of the complaints as possible annually in both a classified and unclassified reports to the HASC and SASC for two years. This duration would allow Congress to learn if things are getting better, staying the same, or getting worse. It also would give the HASC and SASC the grist to determine, what, if anything, might be done to improve matters. For the second class of problems created by excessive secrecy, add a requirement that the Joint Space Operations Center submit a classified report annually for two years detailing in what areas has excessive secrecy or failure to follow required coordination methods resulted in programs costing more and being less mission effective. This report would include whatever remedies the center thought might promote better communication and more efficient programs while protecting highly sensitive programs critical for US national security and war fighting.

DEFENSE NEWS

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Stovepipes in space: How the US can overcome bureaucracy to improve capabilities

By: Dennis Blair and Robert Work

With our dependence on space-based systems growing, and threats to them accelerating nearly as fast, the new U.S. Space Force is good for the country. A military service fighting to maintain our vital on-orbit capabilities, even while they are under attack, will be a key member of the joint war-fighting team.

Gen. John “Jay” Raymond and his staff are working a wide range of tasks to stand up the Space Force. They include important ongoing responsibilities such as space situational awareness and commercial satellite contracting, as well as planning for and exercising defensive and offensive missions in wartime. However, their efforts are made less efficient and effective by one huge impediment: the over-classification and compartmentation of both program and intelligence space information.

Overcoming this impediment will require a personal push from the entire leadership of the Department of Defense, led by the secretary, as well as the intelligence community, led by the director of national intelligence.

Those of us who have served in high-level defense and intelligence positions have been aware of the problems for years, but neither we nor those who came before and after us have sustained the effort necessary for reform. The rules and procedures for handling sensitive information about space systems were set early in the space race when the sensitive nature of the nation's efforts against an existential foe created a "norm" of compartmentalized, classified programs at the highest levels.

Whatever the validity of the reasons at the time, by now the partitioned nature of space program classification still remains and far exceeds that of other equally sensitive domains — air, land, sea, undersea and cyber. There are at least three major baleful impacts of the current system:

Duplication with space acquisition programs: Because of the multilayered security compartmentation in the space domain, in many cases the same tech-development problems are solved multiple times, sometimes even within the same organization! By the time the chain of knowledge reaches a person with sufficient clearances to see across the compartments, that person is such a high-level executive that he or she doesn't have sufficient depth in the technology and/or the time to dig into the area to recognize that one solution has applicability across multiple compartments.

As the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. John Hyten recently put it: "If the only people in the room are four stars, you really can't get any work done." The result is both wasted resources and missed opportunities. The Department of Defense has no idea if we are spending enough on space because the efficiency of what we spend is so reduced by over-classification.

Nonexistent or rudimentary integration of space capabilities into the plans and exercises of combatant commanders: Most space programs believe they have done their duty to the war fighter if they have presented a briefing to a four-star combatant commander and added that leader's name to the "in-briefed" list, and assumed that he or she

can single-handedly fold the capability into the operations plans of the command. The commander signs a piece of paper with strange names on it, informing that individual that if he or she talks with anyone else about the program, the signatory will be liable to prosecution. Without knowledgeable operations staffs that have exercised these programs, there is little chance they will be effective when needed the most — when conflict starts.

Ignorance of specific space threats: China and Russia are deploying space-based systems that will threaten forward-deployed, American joint task forces at sea, in the air and on the ground. Yet, the details of this threat are so highly classified that they are not known by the deploying forces. It matters to a carrier battle group in the Western Pacific exactly how well a Chinese satellite system can track individual ships — to what accuracy, under what weather conditions, despite what countermeasures. Currently, information like this can only be provided to forward forces with extraordinary precautions that make it late and often useless. The battle groups have not incorporated this key intelligence into predeployment training. If the situation is this bad for American forces, it is even worse for coalition forces alongside us in every war we have fought.

What is the solution? The problem is not easy, or else it would have been fixed by now. There are powerful, bureaucratic forces invested in the current system: The rewards for sharing pale against the penalties of mishandling highly classified space information.

In practice, it is almost impossible for a military commander or civilian official to overrule the security bureaucracy. As a first step, we recommend the establishment of a high-level commission of former officers and officials to recommend a better system. The commission should be charged to document the costs of the current system, then to come up with a better one that will protect information to a high degree while allowing much greater sharing across acquisition programs, between programs and operational forces, and between the intelligence community and operational forces.

With a plan for improvement in hand, current defense leaders will have a blueprint for improvement, and Gen. Raymond's new service will have a better chance for success.

Dennis Blair is a former commander of U.S. Pacific Command and served as the director of national intelligence. He currently chairs the Lockheed Martin Space Senior Advisory Group. Robert Work previously served as U.S. deputy secretary of defense. He is currently a director at Raytheon Technologies and is on the board of advisers for several small, high-tech space companies