

Senator Opposes Pentagon Plan To Downgrade Space Command

March 10 2006

Sen. Wayne Allard (R-Colo.) has told the Defense Department he will oppose any Air Force proposal to downgrade its U.S. Space Command and said he is asking Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to justify the Pentagon's plan.

The Space Command's headquarters, currently in Colorado Springs, Colo., would be relocated to the U.S. Strategic Command headquarters in Omaha, Neb., under the plan, and the space operation would be downgraded to a division within the USSC.

Allard, a member of the Appropriations subcommittee on military construction and veterans' affairs, said the 2001 Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization had concluded that "the security and well being of the United States, its allies and friends depend on the nation's ability to operate in space... The pursuit of U.S. national interests in space requires leadership by the president and senior officials."

Secretary Rumsfeld chaired the commission.

"Space is critical to our armed forces," Allard said in a statement. "Nearly every military operation we carry out makes use of assets in space in one way or another, be it using our satellites to locate the position of the enemy, providing instant communications or gathering dependable intelligence."

Allard said he has asked Rumsfeld "to provide me with information on whether he is supportive of those in the Air Force who wish to reduce the importance of space within that particular service."

In a March 1 letter to the Defense Secretary, Allard wrote: "Despite this national security imperative, it appears that the Department of Defense has not been devoting sufficient attention to enhancing and defending our nation's space dominance. In fact, several recent management and organizational changes suggest that this trend is accelerating, much to the detriment of our nation's security."

The letter continues, "A more recent example is the on-going discussions within the Air Force regarding the reorganization of its various components. These discussions have included the possible reduction of the rank of the Commander of Air Force Space Command from a four-star major command to a three-star billet and the transfer of Air Force Space and Missile Command to Air Force Material Command."

Allard called the Air Force "the Department of Defense's executive agent for space" and said the service "remains responsible for executing most of the department's resources for space research, development, acquisition and operations. This mission requires leadership with sufficient rank and credibility to ensure that space remains a top priority within the Air Force and that sufficient resources are allocated for this purpose."

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