

Chaotic space traffic needs rules: US general

May 13 2010



India's GSLV-D3 rocket takes off from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) facility in Sriharikota. A top US general has called for international rules to control chaotic space traffic, warning satellites are increasingly at risk of collision.

A top US general on Thursday called for international rules to control chaotic space traffic, warning satellites are increasingly at risk of collision.

General James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said it was no longer possible for the United States and other countries to keep vast numbers of orbiting satellites a secret.

"We're going to have to get to some level of regulation. Nobody wants to do that," Cartwright told a conference sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a US think tank.

The general said he is daily faced with the question: "How many people are going to run into each other in space today if we don't cajole, plead with somebody to move out of the way in the next orbit cycle?"

"How many people are going to step on each other's signals?"

A collision last year between a Russian and US [satellite](#) underscored concerns over a lack of traffic controls in space and the growing amount of [space debris](#).

More than 50 years after the start of the space age there are still no globally agreed rules for orbital tracks, as there are for flight paths for aircraft.

"We're going to have to get some sort of a management construct for how we do business out there," he said.

Cartwright said the military was not out to "take over" space as some have warned, but he said the number of satellites was growing and there had to be a "shared understanding" among countries so "we can do business in a safe way out there."

Cartwright, who is taking part in the drafting of a new US military space strategy review, also said covering the defense space program in a blanket of secrecy was damaging the country's commercial interests.

"By keeping it secret, what we have done is so disadvantage our own industry that we're becoming non-competitive in this environment, because we can't do what we need to do in technical and intellectual

capital to go out there and compete in the global market.

"Our ability to build components etcetera is lagging," he said. "Our ability to compete on the international market for commerce in space has really taken a dive."

He compared the current secrecy applying to military [space](#) satellites to flying a fighter jet over New York City without paying heed to other air traffic in the area.

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Citation: Chaotic space traffic needs rules: US general (2010, May 13) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-05-chaotic-space-traffic.html>

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