

Worried on China, US seeks rules in space

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China stunned the United States in 2007 by becoming the third country to shoot down one of its own satellites in space, the first such test in the more than two decades since Washington and Moscow halted their "Star Wars" programs.

Gregory Schulte, a senior US official in charge of space defense,

described China's investment in the field as "eyeballing" and said he has asked his Beijing counterparts in past talks to set "rules of the road" moving forward.

"We told them that we are worried that, particularly in crisis, a misunderstanding in space could easily lead to an inadvertent escalation that would not be in the interest of either of our countries," he said.

The United States seeks an understanding "over what responsible behavior might look like," Schulte, a deputy assistant secretary of defense, told the congressionally mandated US-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

However, Schulte doubted [China](#) would carry out a new anti-satellite test. The 2007 strike caused massive debris, with Schulte saying that the US military issued 700 warnings in the last year alone that satellites -- including those from China -- could collide with the junk.

"Maybe they can't do something as dramatic and as embarrassing as the (2007) test, but they're clearly looking to exploit what they perceive as a weakness," he said.

China, which also has an active civilian [space](#) program, has insisted that its efforts pose no threat. It carried out the 2007 test after then president George W. Bush rejected a call for an international ban on anti-satellite tests, saying the United States reserved "freedom of action."

The [United States](#) and its allies have repeatedly urged China to show more transparency as it ramps up its defense spending.

China said it plans to hike its defense budget 12.7 percent in 2011 to 601.1 billion yuan (\$91.7 billion) in 2011. While experts believe the actual figure is higher, it is far less than the \$700 billion US defense

budget this year.

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