

# US report urges easing rules on satellite exports

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Congress should ease restrictions on US satellite exports that are unnecessary and place US firms at a "disadvantage," the Pentagon and the State Department said Wednesday.

Current rules are outdated and undermine the competitive position of US companies without bolstering [national security](#), the Defense and State departments said in a report to Congress.

Keeping satellites that are commonly available on a restricted export list, and insisting on special monitoring of "low-risk [launch](#) activities" by foreign companies using US satellites, has resulted in only "limited national security benefits," the report said.

"Moreover, this practice places the US space industrial base at a distinct competitive disadvantage when bidding against companies from other advanced satellite-exporting countries that have less stringent export control policies and practices," it said.

The US president has the flexibility to decide when to impose restrictions for other exports, but under current law satellites fall into a special category with strict rules.

The report said satellite exports should be treated like other "dual-use" technology, with the executive branch given the authority to chose when to block some deals.

Over the past 15 years, large numbers of commercial [satellite](#) systems have become less vital to military and [intelligence agencies](#) and now have mostly civilian uses, such as earth mapping and direct broadcast television, according to the report.

"As a result, US export controls over these items should reflect their decreased sensitivity," it said.

The report recommends that some types of exports should be regulated by a less restrictive Commerce Department list instead of the State Department's list. The suggested items included [communications satellites](#) without classified components, satellites with remote sensors that fall below certain thresholds, and parts associated with these satellites.

But certain items needed to remain on the State Department's restricted "US munitions list," the report said, citing satellites that perform a purely military or intelligence mission, high-performing remote sensing satellites, and components related to those satellites.

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