

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Press Briefing

“Cost of the Space Force”

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Location: CSIS Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Time: 2:00 p.m. EST

Date: Monday, November 19, 2018

TODD HARRISON: Well, good afternoon, everyone. I'm Todd Harrison.

And so what we're releasing today is a short CSIS brief on what a Space Force would cost. So, actually, where's the clicker? Do you have the clicker? Do this. OK.

So here's the short answer. (Laughs.) All right, this is the number I know everyone is actually going to be looking for as you wade through the report. And so I'll get to that later. But a lot of the numbers that have been out there are a five-year estimate of the additional cost of creating a new military service for space. If you bore down my analysis, that's what it actually runs out to. That's the five-year cost of the additional people and activities that you would need.

All right, so how do I get to that? All right. So, first of all, some important assumptions and estimates that I'm about to show you. I did not include intel agencies like the NRO. That's not meant as a judgment on whether or not they should or should not be included. It's just a practical matter that pretty much everything to do with them is classified in terms of their workforce and their budgets.

So I would be, you know, coming up with a wild guess as to what they – oh, that's not working. OK. So it would be difficult to try to estimate within all of these classified organizations that's space-related. So I left those out. So just keep that in mind. If you would pull the NRO into the Space Force, it's going to add to the numbers you see here, because that's not been included.

Also I'm not including the cost of standing up U.S. Space Command or a Space Development Agency because these are separate decisions. Now, you may do those things in conjunction with creating a new service or not. So that is separate, not included here.

And also it doesn't assume that we're going to change what we're actually doing in space in terms of activities, capabilities. That again is a separate decision. If you want to do more in space, well, yes, you're going to increase the budget according to whatever you need to do more in space. I just focused on the reorganization part of it. And the appendices of the brief – the main body of the brief is three pages, I believe, and then there's 13 pages of appendices. If you want to see all of the detailed assumptions that go into it, it's all there.

OK. So there we go. So I looked at three different options, three different levels, if you will, of creating a new service for space. So the first one is the Space Corps. So that would be a new service, but it would remain within the Department of the Air Force. This would be limited to just transferring over all of the space organizations that are in the Air Force. So it would not be pulling in things from the other services.

So here are – you can see on the map here, here are the main bases. And the circles correspondent to the size of the workforce that's at each of these bases that's doing space-related work, according to my estimate, which I will go ahead and tell you that there's inherently some subjective assessments that have to be made in here.

So, for example, Peterson Air Force Base. I pulled over almost all of the people from that base. It is the headquarters of Air Force Space Command. Left out a flying wing that's there. But you could argue that actually not all of those people are doing space-related jobs, and they would not necessarily need to transfer over. But you can see all of those assumptions in the appendices.

Here are the main organizations. This is basically 14th Air Force. And you end up with a total workforce of just over 27,000 people. That's military, active and reserve, plus civilian full-time equivalents, and a budget – here, I'm going to move this thing out of the way so we can see it – a budget of 11.3 billion (dollars). Now, that's the annual budget. But the new funding that's in there is just 0.3 billion (dollars) of that. The other 11 billion (dollars) already exist in the Air Force's budget. You would just be moving it from Air Force accounts to Space Corps accounts. So the new funding is at 0.3 billion (dollars). And that is basically for your headquarters staff.

OK. The next option I looked at is – come on, computer. (Laughs.) It does not want to go. There it goes. Space Force light is what we're calling it. So this includes everything in the Space Corps option, plus the space-related organizations and activities in the other services, in the Army and in the Navy. And so we can see what those organizations are here. So, like, the Army 1st Space Brigade, you would keep it at Fort Carson. At Ford Carson it would just be a tenant unit there. You're not going to take the whole base. It's just that one unit.

Also, the Navy PEO for Space systems, you would take that, but it would remain tenant unit at SPAWAR out in San Diego. And then you would take the Navy Satellite Operations Center at Point Mugu. So under this option, you end up with a total workforce of just under 36,000 people, an annual budget of \$13.4 billion (dollars). Of that, about 0.4 billion (dollars) would actually be new funding. The other 13 billion (dollars) is just transfers within existing accounts. This computer is, like, really slow. (Laughs.) There we go. All right.

The third option I looked at was the largest, most expansive option. We called it Space Force heavy. This creates a separate department of the Space Force. It includes everything in the Space Force light option plus some missile defense activities that could be construed as being space-related. So taking the 100th Missile Defense Brigade at Fort Greeley and Vandenberg, those are the ones that do the ground-based interceptors, which are – it's a mid-course intercept capability.

So one could argue that that could be a defensive counter-space or an offensive counter-space capability. And also, sensors and tracking capabilities in the Army and Missile Defense Agency, and a satellite communications contingent of folks who work these issues at DISA. With this much more expansive scope for the Space Force, you'd up with a total workforce of about 48,500 people, a total annual budget of 21 billion and a half (dollars). Of that budget, only a half a billion (dollars) is actually new funding that would be needed for the Space Force. That's for your headquarters overhead that goes with that.

All right. So comparing all the options, put them all here, you can see the three that I analyzed, and then I pulled in the relevant stats for the other military services, existing services, so you can see a comparison here. A few things I would point out, that in terms of the total workforce under the Space Force heavy option it's going to be almost the size of the Coast Guard, but with about twice the budget of the Coast Guard.

Of course, the reason for that is if you look within the funding lines that would transfer to the – to the Space Force, there's a lot of R&D funding. A lot of R&D for development and procurement of, you know, complex space systems, which the Coast Guard doesn't have the equivalent of that. So really, it's the equipment costs are going to make a Space Force much more heavy, even if the workforce – I'm sorry, not much more heavy – much more expensive than the Coast Guard, even if they're similar in workforce size. The budget for the Space Corps is actually pretty similar to the budget for the Coast Guard. So I think probably, if you're comparing the different Space Corps or

Space Force options, the closest military service we have, just in terms of size budget, is going to be the Coast Guard. All right.

The other thing – well, here, I think this is on the next slide – a few takeaways from all of this.

So, of course, the total annual funding required is going to vary considerably depending on how you scope your Space Force from a Space Corps within the Department of the Air Force all the way up to a very expansive Space Force heavy, the size of your workforce is going to vary. I would point out, again, this is not including the NRO or space-related capabilities in other intelligence agencies. That would be additive to all of these options.

I'd just outline three options here. There are a lot of hybrid options, of course, that are going to be available as well. Ninety-six percent of the funding in all three options is not new funding, it's just transfers from other accounts that already exist in the services. The Air Force would, of course, lose the most from any of these options. It would lose more than 11 billion (dollars) per year in annual funding. That would just get transferred over to the new service.

The other interesting thing I found in this is that, looking at all the personnel numbers that would transfer over, the Space Force would be more than 50 percent civilian. Under all three options, there are more than 50 percent civilian personnel in the total workforce, and the other services range from 10 to 36 percent civilian. So it would be a more civilian-heavy service than any of the others.

And so, again, the bottom line here, if you want to compare it to the Air Force's estimate from September, they said 13 billion (dollars), but, of course, that included U.S. Space Command and it was a five-year cost. My five-year cost is 1.5 (billion dollars) to 2.7 billion (dollars) which actually seems to be in line with what Deputy Secretary Shanahan had suggested last week. Of course, we had already – I had finished all these numbers before he made those comments, so I guess that worked out.

Q: (Off mic) – in advance?

MR. HARRISON: No. No, no one from DOD has seen this in advance.

OK, so with that, I guess we can get a copy of the paper, but you have them in print here in the room. With that, we'll open it up to questions here from the room.

Yes, use your microphone.

Q: Steve Trimble with Aviation Week.

So what not include NRO and the other intelligence agencies that would be relevant?

MR. HARRISON: It's classified. That's the bottom line. I don't have access in a publicly sourceable, unclassified document of the workforce and the budgets of those organizations. That's why it was not included.

Q: And how – well, could that change the numbers substantially?

MR. HARRISON: Yes. Yes, it would change the numbers. If you – if you moved over just the NRO for each of these options, they would all go up significantly in terms of annual budget and the workforce.

Q: But I'm actually talking about new funding.

MR. HARRISON: Oh, new funding. Yeah, so your headquarters then would scale somewhat with that addition, so your headquarters costs will go up incrementally because of that. So you might go from, you know, .5 billion (dollars) per year to, like, .6 (billion dollars) or .7 (billion dollars).

Yes, Sandra?

Q: Thank you. Sandra Erwin, Space News.

If you were trying to contrast this with the secretary of the Air Force's proposal that was 13 billion (dollars), it seems like it would be hard to make an accurate comparison because she included Space Command, she included all the additional things that you need to do contested space.

MR. HARRISON: Yeah.

Q: So that is really the big difference from what you did.

MR. HARRISON: Yes. So I think the best comparison – so this is from the SECAF memo with the cost estimate. So these two things at the bottom, the two bottom lines, they clearly are for Space Command, right, so they shouldn't be compared. These are kind of ambiguous as to what they are for. The top one is the best comparison. And so, you know, we're roughly in line with that.

Where they got all of these additional – this is, like, you know, almost 10,000 additional people they added to their estimate, that's what they have to explain.

Q: I think – I think some of it has to do with the Space Command because the Space Command requires a lot of people –

MR. HARRISON: Yeah.

Q: – requires a lot of buildings that –

MR. HARRISON: Well, so that's these two bottom lines.

Q: Yeah.

MR. HARRISON: It does beg the question, though, of, OK, we already have people that are doing all the functions that Space Command is going to take over. Those functions are being done today within STRATCOM. Why don't those people just move over? I mean, bureaucratically, we know the answer is that, you know, they're going to grow a new organization and they're not going to shrink the other one proportionately. But it does beg the question, why do you have to add so many new people to do something that's already being done, just at a higher rank?

No, but it's these two activities that – where I think the Air Force was either adding new activities, things that aren't yet being done today – which is a separate question from creating a new service, so they should not have included them – or they are not actually transferring over all the people who do space-related jobs in the Air Force.

They're assuming that they're going to – they could be assuming that they're going to keep some of those people and not move them over, which would effectively, you know, increase the end strength of the Air Force. If they don't transfer all the people that are doing space-related jobs today, they can reallocate them for other things. So it's not clear from their estimate what they're doing.

Q: And just a final quick question. On your fully heavy Space Force, does that include all the support elements that all the services have, that Space Force would have the same thing?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. So bringing over, like, people who do base support.

Q: Yeah.

MR. HARRISON: Right. It's bringing over all of those people. And you can see in the appendix I included funding for recruiting, training. Now, what I did not do – one of the assumptions I made is with a service this small, you're not going to open a military academy. That would kind of be ridiculous. And so it did include funding, though, to pay for people to go to the other academies, as well as the other PME schools.

You know, we already have, you know – what do we have, four different war colleges? How many command and staff colleges do we have? You know, the Space Force could send them to, like, the National War College instead of creating its own war college.

Now, you know, if you look back at the creation of the Air Force, the Air Force was created in 1947. I don't think the Air Force Academy opened until '54. And so, yeah, at some point in the future you might want to open your own academy and your own schools, but initially I don't think there's any way you would want to do that. It wouldn't make sense. And it probably doesn't make sense until – if and until the service grows to a sufficient size to support that.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Hey, Scott Maucione with Federal News Radio – sorry, Federal News Network. We changed our name. (Laughs.)

It's a highly speculative question for you. If the Space Force does become a reality, and we're obviously going to be giving a lot more money to space in the future – it's something, an environment that the United States is giving more money to – will having a Space Force cause the U.S. to spend more money in space, right? Is it going to have to grow bureaucracy? Or is the stovepipe going to create more efficiency?

MR. HARRISON: So, you know, I think the way the trends are going, we're probably going to be spending more and more on space in the future regardless. It may – I think, you know, creating a separate service for space is probably going to allow it to protect the space money better than it is today. So, you know, in this past budget cycle, you know, when the overall defense budget came

down, you know, we saw space funding declining as well. And then when the budget started growing, space hasn't grown quite as much within the Air Force as, like, aviation programs have.

So I think that if you have a separate service for space, it's going to be able to, you know, grow and decline, just like the other overall services, and not be disadvantaged. So in that sense it probably ends up with more funding in the future over time. But, you know, we'd have to wait and see. (Laughs.)

Q: Then there would be a possibility that the bureaucracy grows like in every service, where it becomes (bloated)?)

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. I mean, that's a big risk. And one of the things that Congress could do is these headquarters staffs that you see down here at the bottom; this is noted in the paper, but these numbers are taken from a 2013 GAO report, and the Coast Guard number is current FY '19.

But Congress has in the past put caps on headquarters size. So I think, you know, that probably would be a smart thing to do with the creation of a new service, and with Space Command as well, to go ahead and put some caps in on personnel. Now, there are always ways that services find to get around caps like that, but at least make them work for it. (Laughs.)

Yeah. Yes.

Q: I may have missed this because I was a late, but why not include, basically, the intel organizations? I know you said they're classified.

MR. HARRISON: Yeah.

Q: But why not Space Command and Space Development Agency?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah, so the intel agencies, it's just because they're classified.

So U.S. Space Command and Space Development Agency, those are separate questions from creating a military service. So I'm just looking here at the cost of a Space Force. You could do a Space Force with or without Space Command and with or without a Space Development Agency. And quite frankly, with the Space Development Agency, I don't think it's well-defined enough yet what its mission would be and what type of acquisition programs it would encompass to really be able to speculate on the size of the workforce. And ultimately, the size of the workforce is going to drive the cost of that.

Yeah. And, I mean, there's still questions about that on how do you deconflict what a Space Development Agency is doing versus the Space and Missile Systems Center, right, and who's going to take which programs, and does SMC eventually phase out entirely and then all the work transfers to the SDA? Yeah, kind of remains to be seen, I think.

Yeah.

Q: Hi. Vivienne Machi with Defense Daily.

I was wondering, can you clarify whether are you considering each of these options would be stood up within five years? Or are you assuming that some of them might take longer or take less time, and that would factor into your budget in some way?

MR. HARRISON: Oh, that's a great question. So I'm just assuming kind of an end state once they're stood up. I did not try to, you know, assume a timeline for when all of this would transition over.

You know, what the Trump administration has said is they want something to stand up in FY '20. You know, what does stand up mean when you're creating a new service? It could mean as little as you have a secretariat office stood up with someone in that seat. (Laughs.) Right? And the transfer of all these different funding lines and organizations and activities, that could happen gradually over several years after that, even though you have officially stood up, you know, in FY '20.

I think that's one of the questions going forward that Congress is going to have to grapple with, is how – if they want to do this, how quickly do you do it and how do you make it an orderly transition that, you know, doesn't shock the system, if you will, trying to have a bunch of people rebadge all at once?

Yeah. Yes.

Q: Hi, yes. Courtney Albon with Inside Defense.

Looking just at the new cost numbers annually for the different options, are there things that the Pentagon could add into those new costs that would drastically increase those numbers? And what could some of those things be in each of those scenarios?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah, so I think the biggest thing that could – so the new cost is really the workforce down here, right? The biggest thing that could change this is if they assume that this – you know, the existing workforce does not fully transition over. So, you know, if the Army says, oh yeah, you know, we thought we had a few thousand people doing space-related work but actually it's only 50, you know, and so you only get 50 people transferred over, then you're going to have to add a lot of new people to make up for that. So I think that's one of the biggest risks, is getting an accurate headcount on who's doing space-related work all the way down to, you know, identifying the positions, and making sure that those actually do transfer over.

I mean, the other thing is, you know, facilities, building new facilities. You know, the Air Force previous estimate – this was for – this was for Space Command, but this is the cost of a new building. That's a billion dollars to build a new building for an organization that used to exist. Those facilities are still out there. (Laughs.) So you could have, you know, folks adding in things like that. You know, which – building a new facility is a one-time cost, but then the upkeep of that is an ongoing cost. And so you're going to have to add people and maintenance dollars to keep up with that in the future.

So those are some of the things that could be added in.

Q: If I can ask, too, there's a lot of detail in these charts – PE lines and all of that. Do you think we will see that level of detail in the Pentagon's budget release this year? Will we see – do you think we'll see a Space Force J-Book or something like that?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah, so they said that it would be rolled into this request, but it's not clear. Are they actually going to, yeah, produce a separate set of J-books for the Space Force? You know, given where they are in terms of planning and scoping, I think it's probably too late for them to do that in this budget request, because you would have to have already determined what's in the Space Force and what's not in it well in advance in order to separate it all out and make separate J-books. So I doubt that they're going to have that this time around.

Q: Travis Tritten with the Washington Examiner.

So Deputy Defense Secretary Shanahan has said that he estimates the Space Force cost to be in the billions, single digit. And I'm just wondering what we know about that very vague estimate and how we can compare it to your numbers. How do we talk about those two numbers?

MR. HARRISON: So one of the golden rules in budget analysis is never rely on budget data that's presented orally. (Laughs.) And so until he's written it down, we don't really know for sure what he meant. So for example, you know, when the Air Force had initially talked about, you know, their costs, 13 billion (dollars), well, we didn't know all these details. This is only when the memo came out that we can start to understand that, oh, actually, a substantial portion of this is for Space Command. It's a five-year cost estimate, you know. And how did they do it? They just took the workforce numbers that they came up with times 175K per person. That actually gives you those numbers exactly.

So, yeah, what Shanahan, his comments from before, I don't think that we know enough. I would presume he probably is giving a five-year cost estimate, just like the Air Force. I don't know if it includes Space Command or not. We'll have to see. Yeah, and, you know, single-digit billions, that could be anywhere from one to nine billion (dollars). (Laughs.) So that's a pretty big range. But, you know, like I said earlier that if it's a five-year cost, if it's just the cost of the service, the Space Force, and it's just the incremental – the new people, the new funding that would need to be added, you know, the estimate I came up with is 1.5 to 2.7 billion (dollars). So it is in line with single-digit billion – if that's what he meant.

Yeah.

Q: Hi. Valerie Insinna with Defense News.

How did you estimate what each headquarters and secretariat staff would be among the three options? And what specifically is included with that – they're all kind of spaced out, I think, 0.11 billion apart from each other? So, yeah, what's the difference? What's in that little difference?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. So it's really coming from this headquarters staff size. So what I did is I went and looked at, you know, headquarters staff for the other services. And you can see, they're kind of all around the place, that the Navy and Marine Corps here are combined. And, I mean, quite frankly, is the headquarters staff really going to scale in linear proportion to the size of your service? I don't think it really does. The closest analogue here I think is the Coast Guard. So I went off of that. And I said, OK, so the Space Corps, you don't have a separate secretariat, because it still falls under the secretary of the Air Force. In the two Space Force options you do, so that's going to be a little more.

So I assumed a base of 500 staff, plus a variable staff that was 5 percent of the total workforce. And so for the Space Force light and Space Force heavy, I assumed a base-level staff of 1,000, plus 5 percent of the total workforce. So that's how I came to those estimates. And where I come up with 5 percent? Well, the Coast Guard is a little over 5 percent in their headquarters staff, so. But, I mean, you know, I would note here that this is – this could be overestimating, because the two Space Force options – the headquarters secretariat staff is larger than the Air Force's, so. (Laughs.)

Yes.

Q: Hi. Vivienne Machi with Defense Daily again.

Just to clarify, for your Air Force personnel, I know you don't – you didn't include NRO costs, but did you include NRO Air Force personnel, for example?

MR. HARRISON: Yes. So those people are still under Air Force total end strength, so they are included in there, yeah. But we don't know how many there are. (Laughs.)

Yeah. Yes.

Q: Paul McLeary with Breaking Defense.

With, you know, the budget numbers for 2020 kind of bouncing between 733 and 700 billion (dollars), and the Hill kind of being not opposed or for the Space Force fully. How do you expect this to play out? Could this be low-hanging fruit for appropriators to either slash or add more money?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. I mean, you know, the – most of this is just a simple matter of reorganization and whether or not you think that's worth it. The added cost is, you know, a handful of F-35s or less than the audit, less than the cost of – the annual cost of the audit. So I don't think cost actually should be that big of a factor in their decisions. I think a bigger factor is whether or not people think it's needed, quite frankly. I mean, and that's what the debate should be about.

Yeah.

Q: Did your analysis factor in any possible, like, efficiencies that could come from streamlining or combining space?

MR. HARRISON: No, I didn't assume any efficiencies. And there probably are a few areas where you could get some efficiencies, but I wouldn't count on it happening. So, for example, some of the space acquisition organizations – like in the Space Force light and heavy options, you're pulling in the Navy space acquisition arm at SPAWAR. There's going to be a lot of redundancy between what those folks do and what the folks at SMC in Los Angeles do. So I would think you could combine those functions and reduce the total headcount.

The other thing is, in all three of these options, you are essentially disestablishing Air Force Space Command, right? You're keeping 14th Air Force and all the units under it and they're moving over, you don't need a headquarters Air Force Space Command if you're going to have a headquarters Space Force or Space Corps, so you could take the personnel that are doing a headquarters function out at Peterson at headquarters Air Force Space Command – I'm sorry – yeah, Air Force Space Command

and just repurpose those billets to be part of your headquarters staff here. So that would save you, you know, several hundred people potentially.

I didn't assume that because of the way bureaucracies work. You probably don't end up reducing those billets.

OK.

EMMA COLBRAN: OK. I just want to open the line to anyone on the phone who might have any questions.

Ray, if we could open that up now.

OPERATOR: Certainly.

(Gives queuing instructions.)

I will go to the line of De Ann Divis. Please go ahead.

Q: Hello. De Ann Divis with Inside GNSS.

MR. HARRISON: Hi.

Q: Hi.

MR. HARRISON: Yeah, go ahead.

Q: There was a question earlier about efficiencies. I'm kind of curious about inefficiencies, for example recruiting staff, personnel, accounting staff, the sort of folks that could be transferred over, but then leave a hole where they are coming from, where they perhaps have been doing tasks that would serve the Air Force writ large. Those people who have that ability would have to be replaced. Did you look at all at the duplication that would have to be created to fill the holes of people who were transferred?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. So I was trying my best in looking through the different bases where people would be transferring from to try to narrow it down to just the people that are doing a space-related job that would transfer over. You're right that some of these positions may be kind of dual-hatted, that they may do – they may do work on space-related programs and activities, but they may also support broader Air Force. And so if there are dual, you know, hatted people like that, then, yeah, you know, the services would have to work out who transfers and who doesn't so that they don't leave holes like that.

In terms of recruiting, I basically went through – and this is in the appendix – and I looked at the costs of recruiting and training that the services are spending today on a per-person basis and then factored that into the costs for each of these options. So, you know, there probably are some small inefficiencies with having another service and having to do nationwide recruiting, you know, and so, yeah, that could be. But that is going to be in the noise in terms of these estimates. You know, if it's less than a hundred million (dollars) per year, then it's hardly going to make a difference on the top-line numbers you see.

Q: If I could follow up, did you look at the cost if things take longer than the timeframe that's originally set? You know, the cost of money, the cost of uncertainty, programs that get hung up.

MR. HARRISON: Yeah, so I'm just looking at a steady-state picture of once the – you know, the transfer has happened, what does the size and the annual budget of the service look like, assuming we just keep doing all the things we're doing today. So I did not look at that transition period and how you would, you know, gradually transition this over.

Q: Thank you.

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. Yeah.

OPERATOR: (Gives queuing instructions.)

MR. HARRISON: We got a question in the room here.

Q: Yeah, Steve Trimble with Aviation Week again.

I was just going through the line items and, I mean, there's a couple that, you know, are code names for something. But, you know, how do you know that they're space-related?

MR. HARRISON: Oh, the program element number? If you look at the line, the program element number starts with 12.

Q: Oh.

MR. HARRISON: Yeah, so they've already identified it as space-related. (Laughs.)

Q: Good to know. All right.

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. And, Marcus, you had a question?

Q: Yeah. Thanks. Marcus Weisgerber with Defense One.

Have you looked at how many contractors would perhaps be needed to support this?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah, no, because they don't report the contractor numbers in this kind of detail. So I did not look at that. The cost of the contractors is included in the cost numbers here, though.

Q: Do you estimate that they'd be needed to fill positions, you know, rapidly while standing this up?

MR. HARRISON: You know, I don't think so because all the – all the functions, you know, that need to be done, with the exception of this new headquarters secretariat staff, all the other stuff you already have people in positions doing the work. So you, in fact, wouldn't want to change them during the transition period. You'd want to keep the people who are doing the functions today doing it. And so those people just keep doing it if – until, you know, they transition over.

Q: I have one more. Being that the Air Force estimate included the Space Command, the intel agencies, and the Space Development Agency, do you stand by the previous comment you made that their estimate was, quote, “an example of malicious compliance”?

MR. HARRISON: Yes, because they were not asked to produce that cost estimate, and they did it with the largest possible scope without sufficient caveats to let people know that that was much more than the cost of a Space Force. And they previously made it known that they don't like this idea. (Laughs.)

Sandra, yeah.

Q: So one of the options, I believe, that is being looked at is a Space Command with some service-like authority. So how would you envision they do that? I mean, what would Space Command acquire that maybe they wouldn't acquire on their own if – (off mic)?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah, so the model there is like Special Operations Command, right? So SOCOM, you know, is a combatant command, but it does have some, you know, service-like acquisition authorities. The big difference, though, is SOCOM, the forces they draw from the existing services, and the existing services already build and acquire equipment that's similar to what SOCOM would need. So for the most part, the forces that are contributed by the services to SOCOM come with their own equipment or, you know, it's the same equipment that the service already buys just with some minor modifications. You know, it's only – the things that SOCOM tends to buy are the unique things that the services are not going to buy, but often it's commercial derivatives or, you know, more heavily modified versions of military platforms. It's not, like, brand-new, you know, out-of-the-blue systems.

So I think that would be a big difference. With Space Command, you know, either – Space Command, if it's going to be organized to be on the SOCOM model, either, you know, it's going to have to rely on the Air Force to send forces, space forces, with equipment – you know, satellites that they've acquired – or it's going to have its own development agency like a Space Development Agency that does space acquisitions for SOCOM, but – for, sorry, SPACECOM – but then, you know, you end up, yeah, in a potential conflict where what do you do with the acquisition functions that are already going on in each of the services that are space-related. Do you shut those down and transfer them all, or do you keep them running in parallel? If they keep running in parallel, do we end up with duplications, redundancies? So I think all of that would need to be worked out if they wanted to go with the, you know, SOCOM model for reorganization.

Q: Have you – have you heard what direction they would go with Space Command?

MR. HARRISON: No, I have not. Yeah. I mean, I don't expect that the administration is going to officially come out with that approach because the president made it pretty clear, you know, he wants a new military service and new Department of the Space Force, a co-equal branch. So I'm – you know, I'm pretty confident that that's the proposal they're going to come out with is for a Space Force.

Probably – you know, in terms of what I estimated here, it's probably going to be somewhere in between the Space Force light and Space Force heavy is what I would expect in terms of scope. And I don't know yet whether or not they're going to include the NRO or other agencies in that.

Yeah.

Q: Why not do an estimate of the transition, the five-year transition, or however long, between Air Force and Space Force or whatever the option ends up being? And if you did, what additional cost elements could that potentially include?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. Well, so you would have – in the transition period, you'd have uniforms. (Laughs.) You know, there are a few things like that. And, I mean, more it's just a matter of you'd be gradually ramping up. So you're not going to ramp up to your full headquarters staff size, you know, in the first year. You're probably going to do that over a few years.

And then the other, you know, gradual transition is all these other funding lines in the personnel that are existing are going to gradually transition over. I don't see that there's a lot of extra costs, you know, other than, like, you know, changing emblems, creating a new flag for the service, creating new uniforms, and, you know, updating regs and things like that.

You know, other than those kind of administrative tasks, I don't see a lot of extra costs, because, again, we're not creating a Space Force clean sheet. We already have space forces. This would just be a reorganization of them. It's much less cool than it sounds at first. (Laughs.)

Yeah, Travis.

Q: Travis Tritten, Washington Examiner, again.

One of Mike Rogers's big concerns is that opponents are going to try to gold-plate the space service to try to kill it. And I'm wondering if, beyond Secretary Wilson's earlier cost estimate, if you have been getting any indication whether the Pentagon may try to do that. And do you think that your analysis here will make that more difficult?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. So I don't know is the short answer. I think that, you know, within the Pentagon, I think the leadership is still very much divided on how to proceed on what options they favor. I mean, I think that there's a camp within the Pentagon that still likes the SOCOM model. I think there's another camp that likes the Missile Defense Agency model, which would basically be a Space Development Agency kind of, you know, on steroids. And then, you know, you've got the president demanding a separate department and service, the Space Force.

So I think there's still a lot of different competing camps. You know, at the end of the day, though, you know, it's the president's proposal. So that's what will win out. You know, do – you know, a way of inadvertent gold-plating of this is if the people who are advocating for one of these other organizational models, they could try to cram the underpinnings of what they really want into the Space Force proposal, right. So, you know, you could have, you know, a beefed-up Space Command, right, with extra authorities. You could have a beefed-up Space Development Agency with additional funding and authorities and things, right.

So you could end up with a Space Force proposal that actually has these other models embedded within it, which could inflate, you know, the overall cost and complexity of the thing. You know, that's going to be up to, you know, the Pentagon and, you know, the White House, the National

Space Council, and OMB to try to make sure that that's not happening, that they're not kludging together, you know, three or four different proposals into one.

Yeah, Marcus.

Q: I guess, in your opinion, do you think if you create a full-up Space Force, is U.S. Space Command necessary? Wouldn't that be like having a U.S. Army Command?

MR. HARRISON: No, it's more like having U.S. CENTCOM – (laughs) – because it's a combatant command. A combatant command has a different function. So the job of a service is to organize, train, and equip. The job of a combatant command is to employ forces. So combatant command – combatant command draws on the forces provided by each of the military services. It is not the force provider, though. And so a Space Force would be a force provider.

I think a separate question, though, is, you know, regardless of whether or not you have an independent service for space, how does Space Command interact with all the other combatant commands? So if you've got a war going on somewhere in CENTCOM, you know, and there is a space-related component to it. Maybe there's, like, GPS jamming, maybe someone's, you know, lasing our satellites or something. You know, and it's part of a conflict going on, and clearly in the CENTCOM region, but activities are happening in space.

You know, who's in charge of which part of that, if you've got a separate space command. I think they've got to work those issues out. You know, I mean, and that would happen even if the Space Command function was still under STRATCOM, right? You still got that deconfliction of responsibility and authority that still needs to happen. But I think it's going to be – you know, it's going to be more in the forefront if you have a separate combatant command for space, that you could have some clashing ideas of who's in charge of which part of a conflict.

Courtney.

Q: Yes. I know this doesn't include estimates on the cost of a Space Development Agency, but have you done any, like, excursions on what that could cost?

MR. HARRISON: No, I haven't, because I haven't seen enough details to try to define what the scope of that would be and, you know, how many, you know, personnel you would need, and what kind of programs are you going to transfer under it, or new programs you're going to start under it. So I did not try to tackle that.

Q: OK. So if the estimate that we're hearing from the Pentagon include that, then that could be potentially a significant –

MR. HARRISON: Yeah, if they include it. Yeah.

Q: Yeah. OK.

MR. HARRISON: You know, it probably is, you know, on the order of, like, the Space and Missile Systems Center, right, at kind of a max. And I don't think that you would start out a Space Development Agency at that size, but eventually ramp up to something perhaps that large. So that might be the closest analogy.

MS. COLBRAN: OK. Is there anyone else on the queue for questions?

OPERATOR: (Gives queuing instructions.)

And we go to the line of Lara Seligman. Please go ahead.

Q: Hi. Can you hear me?

MR. HARRISON: Yes. Go ahead.

Q: Hey. This is Lara Seligman with Foreign Policy.

I'm calling from the Pentagon, so I probably missed some of this. So apologies if this question has been asked already. I'm just wondering what you think the likelihood is that this proposal gets through Congress in this year's budget, especially with the turnover in the House.

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. Yeah, no, we haven't gotten to that yet. You know, I would say at this point it may be a coin toss whether or not this makes it through. So a lot of it is going to depend on what specific legislative proposal the administration puts forward in February, you know, how big of a scope do they envision, how disruptive is going to be perceived as being? And I think another, you know, political factor, quite frankly, is is this being seen as Trump's Space Force, or is this something that the military is getting on board with? I think that, you know, is going to make a big difference, especially in the minds of a lot of Democrats on the House side.

Q: And what – how do you think the military can sort of make this Trump's – or, the military's Space Force instead of Trump's Space Force? And how much do you think the Air Force can obstruct that effort?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. So, you know, I would expect that at this point the Air Force probably, you know, does not come out forcefully for or against the proposal. And they leave this really at the secretary and deputy secretary level which, you know, for something this big – and given that, you know, it has cross-service effects, that's where it should be. And so I think it's really up to Mattis and Shanahan for how much, you know, they want to push this in the springtime.

And, you know, this is something that the legislative proposal is supposed to come out with the budget request in February. This would presumably be wrapped into the National Defense Authorization Act. And so, you know, Congress is going to be debating this, along with the NDAA, all throughout the spring and early summer. And so I think there'll be, you know, plenty of opportunities for Shanahan and Mattis to get out there in front of this if they choose to.

Q: Do you think they will do that, sort of make a case for it? Since, I mean, Mattis has made a case against it before.

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. Yeah, no, I mean, I think it's too soon to tell, quite frankly, how enthusiastic they're going to be in advocating for this. I mean, certainly, if it's the administration's position they're going to support it, but it's a matter of enthusiasm. And I think – I think it's too soon to tell.

Q: Thanks.

OPERATOR: Next from the phone lines we'll go to the line of De Ann Divis. Please go ahead.

Q: Hi. I wanted to ask about the complexity of space and how that would impact both the debate and your numbers. You know, looking at the way it's been in the past is one thing, but we see an enormous amount of potential space operations already on the drawing board and being funded. Given that the theater is changing, how would that impact both the schedule and the costs?

MR. HARRISON: Yeah. So, you know, again, it's a – it's a separate, but interrelated question as, you know, we certainly see that our activities in space, our dependence on space is growing over time. And so I think that would continue, you know, regardless of whether or not we have this kind of a reorganization, you know. I think that it's going to – you know, in a way, it actually might make it simpler if you've got some new-start space programs that are coming along, which, you know, we could see in this next budget request, like, you know – you know, missile defense advocates have talked about how we need a space layer for tracking and sensing, which could, you know, as well – you know, this is tracking ballistic missiles, could track cruise missiles, hypersonic missiles.

If you have a new program start for something like that, then, you know, starting that under the new organization probably, you know, simplifies things and helps that new organization kind of get feet under it from the beginning. Whereas when you're transferring over existing programs, you know, you're always going to bring along some baggage of, oh, well, you know, these guys made different decisions, it was a different organization, I wouldn't have done it this way myself. But some new-start programs probably help the new service get some feet under it initially.

But, yeah, you know, it's going to raise complexity, too, because then you've got to immediately get up and running with oversight and management of these new activities. So it can cut both ways, I think.

Q: Thank you.

OPERATOR: And currently we have no additional questions in queue from the phone lines. Please do continue.

MR. HARRISON: All right. Anyone else in the room? Have you covered it all? Maybe we have. All right.

Yeah, so thank you all for joining us. If you, you know, are reading the paper, have any additional follow-up questions, please feel to reach out by phone or by email.

MS. COLBRAN: We also will have a transcript of this available by close of business, around then, today. So if I don't have your email already, please come over and give it to me. Otherwise, I will get that out to you. Thank you.

(END)