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TRANSCRIPT

**CSIS-Aerospace Security Project and Defense Budget Analysis
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Keynote Address by Representative Jim Cooper (D-TN)**

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Representative Jim Cooper (D-TN)

Chairman, House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

MODERATOR

Todd Harrison

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Transcript By

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Todd Harrison: Next I want to welcome to the stage Representative Jim Cooper. He is – represents Tennessee’s Fifth Congressional District, has served in that seat since I think 2003. He is the chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, which of course oversees United States strategic weapons, ballistic missile defense, space programs, and Department of Energy national security programs. Representative Cooper also serves on the Committee on Oversight and Reform, as well as the Budget Committee.

Todd Harrison: Please join me in welcoming Representative Cooper. (Applause.)

Rep. Jim Cooper: Thank you, Todd.

Todd Harrison: Thank you. Thank you for joining us. So, you know, a lot of interesting things going on in space right now, so, you know, wanted to give you an opportunity to share some of your initial thoughts before we go into Q&A. And I’ll remind everyone if you want to submit a question go to the website and you can enter that. We’ll be watching.

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, thank you, Todd. I’m delighted to be back. I make a practice of trying to be bipartisan, so I’m sorry none of my Republican colleagues were able to join. But I very much appreciated the prior chairman, Mike Rogers, including me in everything and keeping things on a nonpartisan or bipartisan basis.

Rep. Jim Cooper: I was inspired by Bill Roper’s talk. I thought that was a new energy and vision for the Air Force. Some of the developments – like, who wouldn’t want to be funded in three minutes? Like, that’s pretty powerful. (Laughter.) I have some kids who wouldn’t mind that. (Laughter.)

Rep. Jim Cooper: But this is such an important topic. And you and CSIS have been a real leader in helping the nation focus on this. Sadly, we’ve neglected some of this for some time. And I appreciated Bill’s positivity, but a lot of these issues have been lurking for 10, 20 years, and now we’re finally paying attention.

Rep. Jim Cooper: I’m proud of the House’s role in this because two years ago Mike Rogers and I proposed a Space Corps to try to refocus the Air Force on some of these important issues. That met with a mixed reception from the Air Force and from some of our friends on the Senate side. But then, of course, when President Trump weighed in with his Space Force proposal, which I thought was over the top, that did help break some ice both within the Air Force and possibly even in the U.S. Senate to create a more open-minded approach on emphasizing our space needs.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So I think we’re in a magic moment right now for our country when we’re refocusing on what’s really important. I’m thankful that it’s not a Sputnik moment where we haven’t already visibly proven that we’re terribly behind. But invisibly, we are probably behind.

Rep. Jim Cooper: And I try to stress the positive as well as the negative. The world should be so thankful that we’ve given it things like GPS, where anybody for free on the planet can find out exactly where they are, precision navigation and – position, navigation, and timing are essential services for virtually everything, as Bill alluded to in his

remarks. And also things like space traffic control. That's an extraordinarily helpful service when there's so much junk in space and even a tiny particle can take out a satellite. So that air traffic control function is sometimes overlooked, but it's invaluable for these sometimes billion-dollar assets that are above our heads. And I think the world should be grateful for that, because the United States has been a very benevolent power in supplying these services. And the goal is to keep them safe for everybody on the planet, and to keep every nation's satellite safe. So I see this as a very positive, focused – we need to protect our own, but we really need to protect everybody's because it's a global commons. And we need to treat it that way so that it's good for the planet.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So I appreciate, I say, your leadership role in this. I hope Congress can get out of the way of the good developments in the Air Force and in the services. A lot of good things are happening. And I'm excited about that new opportunity for us.

Todd Harrison: And you mentioned you and Representative Rogers two years ago put forth a proposal to create a new military services Space Corps that would be under the Department of the Air Force. You know, can you give us just a little bit of the background of what got you and Representative Rogers so interested in this issue, that brought you to that moment two years ago? Because, you know, you were out on the leading edge of this before it was cool. You know, what made you push out on this particular issue?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, I'd like to say that we were just Star Trek or Star Wars fans, but that's probably not as true as it should be. (Laughter.) Mike had three terms as chairman. And our first term, unfortunately, was spent on DOE security, because some of our plants were not well guarded. His second term was spent on trying to make sure that our nuclear facilities were upgraded because, sadly, many of them had fallen almost apart from the '40s and '50s when they were initially built. Space was the next priority. And it's obvious if you attend any of the briefings that we're a little bit behind.

Rep. Jim Cooper: And it's not just the 2007 Chinese ASAT test, which sadly really for the whole planet created, what, 14,000 pieces of junk in space. And when they're traveling at 17,000 miles an hour, that's a true hazard. And no one really knows how to clean that up yet. So why are we polluting some of the essential orbits in space. This shouldn't happen by any nation. But it's really more of the malign intent that you can see in some of our near-peer rivals. Why are they spending precious money when their nations are poor to do this? That should create doubt and suspicion. Now, we don't want to assume the worst but, like, they're expending these precious assets to do these things that really help none of their citizens.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So I think ideally we would have taken space on earlier. We tried to give the Air Force the benefit of the doubt. We looked at their promotion roles and saw year after year it was mainly the fighter jocks who got to be general. And I love leather jackets and fighter pilots, but that's not the future. Unmanned aircraft, as we've seen with drones, are increasingly important in the world. So we've got to pay attention to technology, and be up to speed, and not have the nation be in any way behind. In fact, we need a huge and safe margin.

Todd Harrison: And so you said that, you know, Trump's initial Space Force proposal was over the top. What are your views on the legislative proposal that was just submitted to Congress a few weeks ago?

Rep. Jim Cooper: I think it's way more modest. In fact, it's about as close to our original House proposal as you can get. I think it uses some Pentagon terminology they're more comfortable with, a Space Command, a Space Development Agency, apparently much like the Missile Development Agency. But what really matters is not the bureaucracy but the substance. We need to be able to acquire state-of-the-art technology and put it on orbit in record time. And I don't mean Air Force record time. I mean faster than the NRO. I mean, faster than – because what matters is the threat-based environment. What matters is meeting the nation's needs. And any obstacle that stands in the way has to be taken out, especially if it's our own bureaucracy at work.

Rep. Jim Cooper: I was interested in Bill's comments, what does he keep up – worry about at night. Well, I'm worried about Congress too. I'm more worried than he is. And CRs are terrible. Budget caps are terrible. And we need to clean up our own house. But we also need to make sure that the vast bureaucracy that is the Pentagon can function efficiently. And in general, a less hierarchical organization, leaner organizations, better talent recruitment, better talent retention – those things are essential for any vibrant, cutting edge organization. And I think we can, as the Air Force is showing signs of doing, move more in that direction.

Todd Harrison: And so we got a couple of questions from the audience here that are related, so I'll ask them together.

Todd Harrison: So, Chairman – HASC Chairman Adam Smith, the Armed Services Committee, has said that what they intend to do in the Armed Services Committee is write a Space Force proposal that is different than DOD's. And, of course, you have your proposal from two years ago. How do you – how do you think you can merge those ideas or what changes would you want to make to what the administration proposed?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, my guess is, from the administration's standpoint, they mainly care that we call it a Space Force, whatever we're doing. OK, we can do that. The House proposal, if you didn't keep up with the committee vote, was passed out of committee 60-to-1 – 60-to-1. That very rarely happens. Now, we didn't succeed, as we would have liked, in conference. But the seeds were planted. And most everybody I've talked to who's been to the briefings are, like, totally on board. Now, you can quibble about this element of the bureaucracy or that, but the key principles, I think, are there. We've got to have an unrivaled space capability. And I think we're on track to make that happen.

Todd Harrison: As – I'm getting a question from many people here in the audience. If you had to put odds on it, what do you think the odds are of some sort of a Space Force initiative getting through the House this year on the NDAA, and also getting through the Senate?

Rep. Jim Cooper: The trouble about the future is it's hard to predict.

Todd Harrison: (Laughs.)

Rep. Jim Cooper: And this one, after the 60 to one vote a couple of years ago, overwhelming floor passage, I think the prospects could hardly be brighter. Now, the future is unforeseeable. There could be some glitch to come up. But I think we're on a path here to achieve everyone's goals, which is first, you know, greater capability for our country.

Todd Harrison: All right. Now, Dr. Roper talked about the Air Force's emphasis on speed in acquisitions. And we've heard that a lot from other senior leaders within the department as well. This is a big shift from about a decade ago, when you had, you know, Secretary Bob Gates talking about how, oh, we need to do things cheaper. We don't need the 99 percent exquisite solution when the 80 percent solution will work.

Todd Harrison: How do you view that shift in emphasis on acquisitions to prioritize speed, which may come at the expense of cost?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, for the historians in the audience, I think every year people have tried to reform Pentagon acquisitions, all the way back to the Eisenhower administration. And I'm not sure that anyone has succeeded.

Rep. Jim Cooper: If you noticed in Bill's remarks, he made a glancing reference to the accelerated 5,000 procedures. Good luck with that one. (Laughter.) SOCOM and others, MDA, have used faster authorities, different authorities, to try to get around the 5,000 procedures. So you kind of ask yourself, why do we still have the 5,000 procedures? But there is so much inertia. You know, this is one of the most difficult bureaucratic problems on the planet, and there are a lot of equities that different interests have and different elements of the status quo. But that should never stop us from fielding promptly superior capability.

Rep. Jim Cooper: I was interested, because in the, you know, Pentagon proposal, by 2024 we will have a fully fielded Space Force. So in the time it took us to start and win World War II or to respond to Pearl Harbor and win World War II, we will finally be able to field one service. That's faster than usual, but it's still not what we should be expecting.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So I look forward to working with everybody in Congress in both parties and with the Pentagon and with our industrial community to try to figure out a way to return to speed and quality, because nobody wants speed for speed's sake. You also want affordable prices. So there are ways to do this. This is the most ingenious country that's ever been. Let's tap into that ingenuity in a more constructive way.

Todd Harrison: So another question from the audience here. One of the things that Chairman Smith has said publicly in recent days is that within the Space Force proposal, I think there are three four-star positions enumerated in that. And he thinks that that's too many and it won't reduce the bureaucracy.

Todd Harrison: What's your view? And how can you remedy that?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, Adam Smith is a great chairman. He's extremely knowledgeable, and I think he's very fair on these issues. And it's no secret that the military has been top-heavy for some time in virtually every department. Bureaucracies tend to do that.

Who doesn't want higher rank and to be paid more money and have a better retirement? What's wrong with that?

Rep. Jim Cooper: But, you know, right now if you make any comparison to a prior point in history, we're vastly top-heavy. So there have got to be ways to do that and be fair to people. Now, you need to give young people promotion opportunities. But in this vast pyramid, there have got to be better ways to do that.

Rep. Jim Cooper: And to me the number of excessive generals is interesting. It's also important how long you're on post at whatever your MOS is. And do you really know your job? And I tend to prefer the Navy model, where you're on duty for six or eight years in naval reactors and you really know what you're talking about. You have total responsibility, as opposed to the in-and-out two- or three-year thing when you parachute in. You really don't know the assignment. By the time you're an expert, you're out of there. Like, how does that work?

Rep. Jim Cooper: And I want fair assignments. I want humane treatment of our personnel. But there's nothing like real expertise, owning the project, seeing it through to the end, making sure it's first-rate. And I don't want to dwell on some of the negative things, but there have been some horrendous problems. And while some in the Air Force are proud that still the B-52 will be flying when it's 100 years old, I worry about that - (laughter) - no matter how thoroughly it's been rebuilt. And I appreciate the rebuilding efforts that have been going on. But, like, where are the new? Where are the superb? Where are the excellent? Where are the - and we've kind of been lacking in that for a few years.

Todd Harrison: Next question here from the audience is about the cost of the Space Force. And so the Pentagon proposal pegs that cost over five years at about \$2 billion. And then the steady-state cost of the additional, you know, management and overhead would be about half a billion a year after that.

Todd Harrison: You know, since you obviously are in support of some sort of a Space Force, a new service, but many of your colleagues have questioned the cost, including Chairman Smith, among others. What do you think the right level of overhead is that could be sufficient for the new service, but also would not be so much that it would cause it to lose support from your colleagues?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, first, think what a vast improvement the \$2 billion number is over the \$13 billion number that the secretary of the Air Force had put out there. Now, both Mike Rogers and I thought that was a little bit of a gold-plated proposal, but we're already headed in the right direction.

Rep. Jim Cooper: When Mike and I originally proposed this, we really thought there should be very little, if any, additional cost, because the Air Force is pretty well resourced already. It's more of an organizational issue. When you have 60 people who are empowered to say no, but no one has the ability to say yes, that's an issue. But that's the way bureaucracy tends to work.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So we will be getting into the numbers. We just are getting the budget books right now from the Pentagon. The budget is late, as you know. And I'm not going to fault anybody over that. But we will do our best in the NDAA to have the 58th or 59th consecutive year of House and Senate passage of that bill. If there's any element of

Congress that still works, it's probably the House and Senate Armed Services Committees.

Rep. Jim Cooper: And remember, when you're talking about budgeting in this space, I would say this is the only part of the federal budget that we don't get to set. It's entirely threat-based. We have to be able to respond to meet and beat whatever is coming at us. So we will do what it takes. We must do what it takes. And the numbers you're mentioning in a budget that's \$750 billion or so, even though, shamefully, 165 (billion dollars) of that is OCO – (laughs) – this is chickenfeed for what Bill Roper accurately described as an absolutely vital national capability; not just talking about the warfighter, but for all of our civilization.

Rep. Jim Cooper: I know some people who can't play golf without satellites – (laughter) – because they need to know the distance to the green. (Laughs.) So this is a very important thing, and it's – we're well within the ballpark of reasonable compromise here.

Todd Harrison: Speaking of the budget, you mentioned the OCO part of the request. What's your view of the overall budget request for FY '20? So, you know, not just space, but the overall budget. And how do you think the House is going to handle all of the OCO for base activities that the administration has tucked in there in this request?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, for anyone who hates acronyms like I do, OCO, or Overseas Contingency Operations, was used as an emergency funding measure after the Iraq and Afghan wars started. And on a temporary basis, that's very understandable. But 15, 18 years later, especially when base activities are included in that emergency funding, it really becomes inexcusable.

Rep. Jim Cooper: This is a harsh way to put it, but, you know, to have an off-budget element of your budget really means that you're not telling the truth. And some of our near-peer adversaries out there are more tuned into our budget than we are. And perhaps our Chinese friends are paying attention that we are not really fully funding our soldiers posted abroad. I mean, we're paying most of their bills, but they're having to pick up the tab when they buy our bonds for some of these needs.

Rep. Jim Cooper: And by the way, one of the most distressing things is we are probably funding the entire Chinese defense budgets, because they have bought so many of our bonds – a trillion plus – that just the interest on those bonds can pay – (laughs) – for their entire defense budget. Whoa. (Laughter.) That is not – now, we appreciate their investment in our debt, but, like, this is not a good situation. But it shows overall how many of our fiscal policies have been woefully mismanaged. And we're going to have to return to common sense in some of these things. And right now, neither party wants to talk about fiscal sanity.

Todd Harrison: And so another question from the audience here. It's specific to North Korea, but we can broaden it a bit more than that. You know, when we talk about ballistic missile threats that the country is facing, and need to improve missile defense systems theater and homeland, what do you think the role of our space forces should be in that? Does a reorganization, first of all, does that help? And, you know, what are the types of new capabilities that we can or should be fielding so that we can better support that missile defense mission?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, when space is properly run, you know, it's almost completely invisible and taken for granted. It's our infrastructure of infrastructures, on which all of our networks really depend. So it's a little bit like a plumber or electrician. You only need them when you're really hurting. And I hope we never – our allies never have to focus on this capability. I hope that what is needed will be available on a timely basis. And that's a well-working system – invisible, above our heads. Maybe you can see them twinkle at night – (laughs) – but other than that, you're completely unaware when you're depending on their services.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So I think our allies should be very confident that – what did Bill say – that we have 46 percent market share of satellites in space already. And it's not just the number of satellites, it's the capabilities they're on. And I think the number would be vastly higher if you looked at capabilities. But anybody who keeps up with this area should know that – who are you going to call when you need something in space? It's basically us. And we got to keep it that way, and not let our margin shrink.

Todd Harrison: And what are your views on the talk about creating a space sensor layer for missile defense? You know, in part to be able to detect and track hypersonic missiles, but also to do better target discrimination in the midcourse phase of flight. Is that a system you would support, a space sensor layer? And if so, do you think that should be under the Space Development Agency, as they're talking about now, or should that be under, you know, SMC, the Space and Missile Systems Center within the Air Force?

Rep. Jim Cooper: On the first part of your question, you know, who's against sensors? Don't we need to know what's going on, especially since the U.S. has been exclusively in space a benevolent power? We need to know, the world needs to know, what's going on. I mentioned space junk already. That's just the most obvious way. Some people call it a space fence. That's a way to protect the world's assets, and the world itself. If something is going on on the planet, it's helpful to know. You know, every once in a while a meteor hits the Earth. The Chelyabinsk meteor airburst with the power of, you know, a large nuclear weapon over a city in Russia of a million people.

Rep. Jim Cooper: And that was apparently a surprise to most people. I'm glad it didn't provoke a nuclear response, or any sort of response. But things like that happen. So being in touch with your own planet is generally a good thing. So I really don't know anyone who's against sensors. Otherwise, you know, do we want to be deaf, dumb and blind? I don't think so. It's good to be in tune with what's going on?

Todd Harrison: And so where do you think responsibility for a program like that should fall, ideally?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Oh, the bureaucratic function is less important. I've been worried about SMC because for years, according to the Air Force, lots of billets, from lieutenant through colonel, have been understaffed because many Air Force officers didn't want to go there, apparently because of a weak school system. And I've made fun of some of the Air Force folks saying: For 20 to 30 years this has happened and you're going to blame our lack of space capability on the fact we have a weak school system in a part of Los Angeles? (Laughs.) But that's how bureaucracy can work. Nobody identified the problem. Nobody solved the problem. And there are different ways to solve the problem.

Rep. Jim Cooper: Ideally, we need a good school system in all parts of the country. But if you can't do that, at least do not injure U.S. space capability by having a domestic infrastructure problem like that. But, see, those sorts of things happen. They happen in any line of business. And somebody with executive responsibility needs to see that, notice that, and take appropriate action. But Congress is largely like a Board of Directors. We should not micromanage. But we should never fail to point out problems that are real problems that should be fixed. And that's part of our oversight responsibility, that we need to be more diligent in conducting.

Rep. Jim Cooper: And it's not just us. Many of these problems have been pointed out since 2001, the Rumsfeld Commission report; 2008, the Allard Commission report. But no one apparently was willing to take action and follow up. So you can still fault Congress for being slow in taking up this responsibility. But we're doing it now. Let's see it through. And this NDAA, I think, will be the one that sees that through.

Todd Harrison: All right. And as part of the Space Force proposal that's been submitted to Congress, DOD is also doing some other reorganizations around space. So one is they're standing up U.S. Space Command. But they're also proposing this Space Development Agency. So questions from the audience here. So, first of all, in Space Command, what do you say to some of the arguments that people are making that, you know, why isn't it sufficient to just create a combatant command for space – recreate a combatant command for space? Why do you also need a military service?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, the Pentagon has its own preferred ways of doing things. And in general, it involves, as you pointed out already, more four-star generals. And that's fine. I want people to be rewarded for good work. But there should be – basically pay for performance. If you do a great job, fine, be rewarded. If you don't, well, then maybe not so much. Command is the easiest way for the military to think about things, because that's a little bit like the fighter jock attitude, the leather jacket and top gun and you're cool. Space is a very different environment. And as you know, with coding and programmers and these unmanned vehicles, it's a little bit more like the Silicon Valley software nerd thing.

Rep. Jim Cooper: And we need a career path for those people as well, because some of them can be extraordinarily brilliant but not necessarily love to do their PT requirements every morning, not necessarily want to laser off their tattoos or get rid of their earrings, or whatever. But what matters is ability. And we have to be able to include those folks in our military and reward them. So I think there are ways to do this. The Space Development Agency will probably get a lot of attention, but in general the Missile Development Agency has worked pretty well, again, as a detour around regular Air Force.

Rep. Jim Cooper: And then we forget that, hey, we should be fixing regular Air Force at the time because these 5,000 acquisition authorities are mind-bogglingly complex. But see, a lot of folks have careers that are vested in that stuff. In general, there needs to be a whole Augean stables type cleanup. And Chairman Thornberry and now Chairman Smith have been very much for acquisition reform. But this is, you know, our gargantuan task. But our military friends could help us do this, because surely there are people in the bowels of the Pentagon who recognize what needs to be fixed and could come to us with ways of doing that.

Rep. Jim Cooper: But for an outsider, especially one who's acronym – (laughs) – averse, it is just an endless minefield of confusion and obstruction. Which, oftentimes, benefits certain commercial interests, because virtually every bit is protested now. And now that's part of the process you have to build in. Multi-year delays after the contract has been awarded. Like, did this happen in World War II? I don't think so. We need to get back to basics in quality and speed.

Todd Harrison: And on the Space Development Agency, the Air Force has pretty publicly expressed some skepticism about the necessity of it. And one of their arguments has been that, you know, the Space Development Agency would be redundant with other offices within the Air Force. What's your view on that? Do you think it's redundant? Do you think it's necessary?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, Air Force basically has fought this from the get-go, and not been, you know, tuned into the Rumsfeld or the Allard recommendations. And I'm not faulting them for that. And turf can be a legitimate interest, but I'm really not seeing a whole lot beyond turf that's really what they're defending. We've had some significant slownesses and gaps in performance. And we're not here to fault people, but let's get it going here. There are ways to do this. So the person who most recently said the SDA is irrelevant or redundant will soon be leaving. (Laughs.) I think that will clear a path for more positive thinking.

Rep. Jim Cooper: What matters is fielding the capability quickly, affordably, and in a quality way, and we can do that. We must be able to do that. So, as I said earlier, whatever it takes to get to that result, we need to do. And I want to give the Air Force and the Pentagon flexibility and their preferred bureaucratic method for doing that. And call it what they want to; what matters is capability.

Todd Harrison: And so, you know, one of the things that Congress and DOD have done to get a little more transparency on space funding within the Pentagon budget is they created a new Major Force Program, MFP-12 they call it, for space where they basically aggregate all the space-related funding in the budget. You know, unfortunately, with all of the Major Force Programs, there's not a lot of transparency on the outside to what program lines are being tagged and going in to make up that total MFP. I see Jamie Morin over here in the front row, so I'm going to blame Kate for that. (Laughter.) But you know, it's a longstanding problem that there's – you know, on the outside there's not, you know, full transparency on what goes into the MFPs. Is that a problem for you? Is that a problem for Congress in conducting effective oversight, to know where the space dollars are being spent? Or do you feel that you have adequate insight?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, the problem of communicating with the Pentagon is a difficult one because, you know, in a vast bureaucracy there are restraints to communication. I've actually found that your work, Todd, here at CSIS has been among the most helpful. Like, when you plotted out the possible costs of different types of Space Force, that was extraordinarily helpful, and I learned that there's possibly even something out there that could be more expensive than Heather Wilson's \$13 billion. (Laughter.) Who knew? (Laughter.) But I don't know, is there something beyond gold plating? Is that platinum plating or something like – or palladium plating, perhaps, right? (Laughter.)

Rep. Jim Cooper: But think tanks can help us greatly by ferreting out this information, because sometimes the juiciest bits are the most hidden. And that's sometimes the way bureaucracy works, you know. Congress hides the ball sometimes, too, so I'm not exempting ourselves from responsibility. But that's part of the give and take, the chase, the hunt of oversight, is to find out – (laughs) – what should be noticed, because very few people are going to fess up and say, hey, I did something bad here, catch me, you know; or I made a mistake here, you know, punish me. And the goal here isn't punishment; it's high-quality performance. And whatever it takes to do that we can do.

Rep. Jim Cooper: This is America, folks. This is the greatest country that has ever existed, and our challenge is just to keep it that way. We didn't have to found it. We – (laughs) – you know, all we have to do is keep the momentum going. That shouldn't be that hard. And with the exciting stuff we were hearing from Bill Roper, that's pretty amazing. I think there's a whole new generational opportunity here to refocus on some of these things we've forgotten about. But for a while our nation abandoned big science. We turned our backs on space. We forgot the big, exciting projects of humanity. And this is an opportunity to do that, and to do it in a humane and safe way. This is a magnificent opportunity for a new generation. Let's seize it, and seize it now. There are ways to do this. And even with all of our problems, we can do this.

Rep. Jim Cooper: To have all these opportunities put out for us, and you say the cost, well, might be 1 (billion dollars) or \$2 billion. Sadly, in the Pentagon budget, that is budget dust, you know? (Laughter.) And I'm not saying go ahead and spend or waste that money. Let's spend it wisely. But it's incredible what can be accomplished and what needs to be accomplished right now, because a number of our most precious things are under threat.

Todd Harrison: So tell me a little bit about, you know, your working relationship with your counterparts on the other side of the aisle now the Democrats are back in the majority in the House. You know, previously, two years ago, when the Space Corps proposal was put forward, you were on the minority side. You were working very closely, you know, joined at the hip with Representative Rogers on this issue. What's your relationship like now with Representative Turner, you know, who opposed – he was one of the few people who opposed the Space Corps proposal in the past. How is that relationship now? And, you know, how do you see his views on this issue?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, Todd, you're being very diplomatic. You said he was one of the few people who opposed it. He was the only one who opposed it. (Laughter.) I mentioned that 60 to one vote; he was the one. (Laughter.) But that does not mean he is a bad person. That means he had the courage to stand up for himself and oppose the vast majority of both parties.

Rep. Jim Cooper: I think the climate has changed a little bit. I mentioned earlier on that when President Trump came out in favor of the Space Force that turned a lot of heads around, both in the Air Force and in the Senate, and maybe one or two in the House. But I can't speak for my colleague. So far he has been a pleasure to work with. I was sorry – you know, this is our district work period – he wasn't able to come here today, but we try to do things in a completely fair, open, and collaborative basis

because what matters is solving problems for the country, not creating new problems because you're in politics. (Laughs.)

Rep. Jim Cooper: So many of my colleagues seem so focused on creating new problems we don't have time to solve the old ones. Because this is actually a fun job if you try to fix problems, but it takes a workmanlike attitude. And first you diagnose the problem, then you find a remedy. And there are ways to do this.

Rep. Jim Cooper: And so far, Mike Turner has been extraordinarily helpful that way. You know, his district includes Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, great research outfits like NASIC. He's well-versed on a lot of these issues. He has been head of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. He's got a good international perspective that way. There are really positive opportunities to work very, very well together. And as I say, so far been no problems whatsoever. So I look forward to that continuing because it's for the good of the country and the world, and who's against that?

Todd Harrison: And so do you think Representative Rogers would make a good secretary of the Air Force? (Laughter.)

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, his career is his career. As I learned from visiting him in Alabama when I went to the Talladega 500 – (laughter) – it's a different country down there. (Laughter.)

Todd Harrison: So says the man from Tennessee to a guy from Mississippi. (Laughter.)

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well –

Todd Harrison: Alabama's different, yeah.

Rep. Jim Cooper: It is different. (Laughter.) Now, we're jealous of their football program, but – (laughter) – no, Mike is an extraordinarily great member of Congress. Now he is ranking on Homeland Security, which is an extremely important responsibility, and I think there are great things in his future.

Todd Harrison: All right. You know, the Air Force is pushing ahead with a follow-on to the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle program. They're now calling it – I think the name is National Security Space Launch. And you know, I wanted to get your thoughts on the acquisition strategy that they're using for that.

Todd Harrison: So the phase that we're in right now – I forget if it's phase one or phase two right now – they have narrowed it down to three companies that are in it, and the next step in this acquisition process is they're going to narrow it down to two companies and then they're going to give a bloc buy – I think it's over a five-year period – to just those two companies. Other companies that haven't made it through this down-select won't be part of that selection process, necessarily. So when they narrowed it down to three companies, SpaceX was not one of them. You know, what's your thought on that acquisition strategy? And should it proceed as the Air Force has currently planned? Do you think it needs to be modified? And what do we need to do to make sure we have competition and assured access to space?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, launch has been a very contentious area, as you know. It's been very much scrutinized, partly because of the hobbies of billionaires as they have undertaken

space as kind of a side activity. We should be thankful for that. And one thing that I'm curious about is if the Bezos do get a divorce, will there then be a his-and-hers Blue Origin program, you know? (Laughter.) I've heard of his-and-hers towels – (laughter) – but never a his-and-hers space programs.

Rep. Jim Cooper: I actually think while it's exciting that these billionaires have this fascination with space and have been so helpful in funding a lot of development that otherwise would not have occurred and a lot of risk-taking that would not have occurred, we have to ask ourselves: They were all able to do this basically on their own dime, and sometimes meet or beat or exceed U.S. capabilities? Like, that's a real wakeup call for us.

Rep. Jim Cooper: Now, as my friendly billionaires – we hope they're friendly, but – (laughs) – you know, I look forward to the day when there's a government acquisition program, whether it's in launch or anything that, like, dazzles the private sector. Now, we are lucky in this country we have strong both, but for a long time now it's been the government is slow. Our delays are so great that we'll buy 20-year-old technology and it'll be launched years from now. That's not good enough anymore. And the speed, the focus of the private sector is something that we need to learn from. So I think there are opportunities here.

Rep. Jim Cooper: There was a lot of pushback on the selection process of the Air Force. I don't claim to understand the ins and outs of that. The key is that we got a vastly superior capability in a hurry at an affordable price, whatever it takes to do that. You know, we're not in favor of one company or another. We just want the capability for the nation.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So you hope that the program managers and the folks in the Air Force are making fair decisions. In some past acquisition processes they haven't necessarily done that. We've had some hiccups and mistakes. So that's the key thing, as I mentioned several times today – reforming the entire Pentagon acquisition process. But that's too big to take on all at once. Maybe we can start with a service. Maybe we can start with an area within the service. And for many people this was not an encouraging mile marker or signpost for the Air Force in this competition.

Todd Harrison: So back to the space reorganization question, another question here from the audience – does it concern you that the proposed space force military service under the department of the Air Force does not include the NRO and other intel-related space functions?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Not only doesn't it concern me, that's one of the positive virtues of the proposal. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Best we can tell, the NRO is not broken. Don't mess it up. Keep it out of the limelight. It's amazing. There are many things that work extraordinarily well in the federal government but, unfortunately, for various rules we're not supposed to talk about them a whole lot. NRO is probably one of those, although nobody should get a free pass forever. You always have to be continually scrutinizing what's going on.

Rep. Jim Cooper: But it very much worried me when the president's proposal wanted to include – wrap up all these three-letter agencies into one in space. That's not a good idea, because they have benefitted greatly from flat management organizations, centralized decision-making authority, being able to put things up in space in a year

or two instead of seven or eight years. That's a huge thing, and then the capabilities are extraordinary. So this is something to very much be proud of and I wish we could talk about it more. But it's a virtue that the NRO is not in this overall proposal.

Todd Harrison: You know, it's worth noting that the NRO is one of the few parts of DOD that's passed a clean audit.

Rep. Jim Cooper: Hallelujah. That's only been a 20- or 30-year process, and one of the most embarrassing things when your own GAO points out every year that the Pentagon is one of the most risk-prone areas of all the federal government. Didn't the Marines get a clean audit? If the Marines can't do it, I don't know. (Laughter.) But it's just – it's kind of amazing that our systems are so degraded and part of it is legacy software systems. Part of it is just stubbornness.

Rep. Jim Cooper: But, you know, if you can't measure it you can't manage it. If you won't measure it, then maybe you don't deserve to manage it. And accounting standards aren't the only thing, but they are a way of making sure that things are coherent and strong and we really need to focus on that. That sounds like a green eyeshade concern.

Rep. Jim Cooper: But the Pentagon has been a standout problem, and I think they only spent a billion dollars last year trying to get audited. And while they failed they said that was actually a plus, not a minus. Well, tell a Fortune 500 company that. (Laughter.) And that shows how vastly different the standards are of government and of business. You know, it's just taken for granted in business that you do this and keep your books.

Rep. Jim Cooper: We've got to do a much better job of keeping the government's books. OCO, as I mentioned earlier, is an outstanding example of that. That's a shameful thing on our budget and now with the president's latest proposal you not only double the OCO account to hide the total spending amount but half of it is actually designated as a base. It's just – it's like admitting your problem. It's called base OCO now, which should be a contradiction in terms.

Rep. Jim Cooper: It's like jumbo shrimp. (Laughter.) It's just, like, what's going on here. But that shows how out of control a process can become. In addition to the president's, you know, yo-yoing, first the Pentagon was going to go down to 700. Now it's up more, like, 750. It's, like, that shouldn't happen in an organized country.

Todd Harrison: I got a question here from online, and I'll tell you that I hear this all the time. So I want to give you the chance to address it. The question is, would the establishment of a space force mean that the U.S. plans to use space for military purposes.

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, people need to remember, Sputnik was the first use of space and that was a Russian or Soviet military operation. In general, for the last many decades, space has been entirely benign and nonmilitary. In fact, one of our problems right now is so many of our satellites are so peaceful they're not in any way protected. We had hoped that space would not be taken advantage of. But with the Chinese ASAT in '07 and some other developments, sadly, that is looking like it's no longer true.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So we need to be able to have an extraordinary defensive capability, and possibly an offensive one. But let's – so the U.S. are not the bad guys here. This is one

reason I've been pointing out the fact that free GPS for the world, you know, free air-traffic-management control, which probably should be spun out of the Air Force and put in a civilian agency so it's a little bit more like the FAA or a more civilian-oriented place.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So no one wants Star Wars. No one wants to militarize space. But what we do have to do is keep our assets safe and keep them safe for the world. And that's an entirely benign and benevolent activity.

Todd Harrison: So a few budget-related questions here as we wrap up. I know we're starting to run out of time. But it is budget season.

Todd Harrison: So what's your view on the Budget Control Act budget caps? Do you think Congress is going to end up lifting the caps, raising the caps to a higher level, like they have in all previous years since the BCA has been in effect? Or do you think this is going to come, you know, down to the wire and, you know, use of some sort of an OCO gimmick to get around the budget caps?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Well, the number I'm hearing for defense is 733 billion (dollars). And the caps will be lifted to whatever would allow that. This, you know, problem between defense and domestic will be settled by people above my pay grade. Seven hundred thirty-three billion (dollars) is a very good number. We can live within that.

Rep. Jim Cooper: Sadly, I think the budget process in the House and Senate have entirely broken down. Neither the House nor the Senate are likely to pass a budget. But remember, what we call a budget in the United States really isn't a budget anyway. It's a one-year political fix that in no way obligates the next Congress, even the next session of Congress, to follow those numbers. And as I mentioned already, when you have OCO and other off-budget financing in there, the budget is really a shambles anyway.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So I look forward to the day when we can get back to more orderly processing. I do think this year could set a record in terms of passage of appropriations bills. The goal on the House side is to have all the appropriations bills, probably using the minibus approach, to have them done by, like, June 30th. That hasn't happened in, you know, a long, long time. That's – now, we can't control the Senate. No one can. (Laughter.) But that would be a darn good start for the House to get that out there, and perhaps might shame the Senate.

Rep. Jim Cooper: A little advertisement here: I had a bill – it's the most unpopular bill in Congress – called No Budget, No Pay. But it actually became law in 2013. And that year, as a miracle, even the Senate passed a budget, because it turns out that even senators like to be paid. And it's not just for budgeting. It's also for passage of appropriations bills. That fundamental pay-for-performance concept really works. And Congress is one of the few bodies on earth, one of the few places to work on earth, where you can be paid and not do your work. In my opinion, that shouldn't happen.

Rep. Jim Cooper: Now, we haven't been able to make that law again. When John Boehner picked up my proposal and helped it become law, he mainly did it for venal political reasons. But if that were to be a permanent principle – and, by the way, this isn't so outlandish. The California legislature, the New York legislature, it's routine for

them. If they can do it, surely we can do it. But that would ensure that the work of the nation gets done more on time and that we don't have terrible atrocities like the Budget Control Act, because I think, as Admiral Mullen pointed out one time, the greatest enemy the Pentagon faces sometimes isn't any foreign enemy. It's the U.S. Congress when we refuse to budget appropriately and on time. And sometimes we make them live with CRs. You cannot run programs on that basis.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So I think that Congress is getting the message on this. And I think that this year we'll have a pretty much assured \$733 billion defense budget.

Todd Harrison: And last question from the audience. In the past, when we had earmarks, that tended to be the grease that made the budget wheels turn. Do you think that Congress should bring back earmarks? And would that help get back to regular order?

Rep. Jim Cooper: Earmarks can be managed properly, but it's unlikely that they will be managed properly after the first year or so of reintroduction. We fought so hard – and I'm one of the strongest anti-earmark folks in Congress – to get rid of the – for example, the Duke Cunningham temptations or the Don Young temptations, because pretty soon these are not peer-reviewed, pretty soon they get completely out of control, and pretty soon they become a national embarrassment if not an invitation to corruption.

Rep. Jim Cooper: So in general, government spending needs to be well-policed, and no dollars should be spent that's not worth spending. And to give each individual member of Congress a small slush fund to grease their own reelection – because that's really what it's about – is a shameful process. Now, there is an argument, well, the executive branch does it all the time, so we should have Article I powers to be as bad as the executive branch. Well, that is not a good argument in my books. Let's clean it up on both sides of government.

Rep. Jim Cooper: But as I said, while it's theoretically possible to police this, which was probably done 20 or 30 years ago, in modern times the standards have become so degraded that if you want a swimming pool in your district or a(n) interstate interchange across the country in someone else's district, that becomes a suitable subject for an earmark. That is wrong. That is a misuse of taxpayer money. That erodes support for people paying their taxes when they see these abuses, because you know they'll be highlighted by the newspapers. So let's not do this.

Rep. Jim Cooper: But the pressure is growing because as people find difficulty passing bills they want to buy votes in Congress, just like the congressmen who get earmarks want to buy votes back home. This is wrong. This is not the way things should be done. I don't want to be too much of a Boy Scout, but let's have arguments on the merits and let's have the best argument win, not the person with the most money. This is really a challenging moment for the legislative branch, and I'm hopeful we'll be able to resist this temptation.

Todd Harrison: Well, Congressman, our time is up.

Rep. Jim Cooper: Thank you, Todd.

Todd Harrison: I want to thank you for joining us.

Rep. Jim Cooper: My pleasure.

Todd Harrison: It was a real pleasure to have you here. And, everyone, please take a coffee break and we will start back with Secretary Shanahan 9:55. (Applause.)

Rep. Jim Cooper: Thank you. Appreciate it.

Todd Harrison: Thank you. (Applause.)

(END)