

Point Man for Space

By James W. Canan, SENIOR EDITOR

The Air Force, having made its strongest-ever commitment to space, has now appointed its first-ever Assistant Secretary for Space. Tall tasks lie ahead for him.



Washington, D. C. One year ago this month, the Air Force made its strongest-ever commitment to space. On December 2, 1988, its leaders issued a new policy that put spacepower on a par with airpower. Starring roles were envisioned for the Air Force in space and for space in the Air Force.

Now the Air Force has a point man for putting that policy into practice. He is Martin C. Faga, the first Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space.

Mr. Faga has a tall order: "to ensure that the Air Force integrates space throughout its structure and to prepare for the evolution of spacepower from combat support to the full spectrum of military capabilities."

Thus did Secretary of the Air Force Donald B. Rice define the purpose of USAF's new space-leadership post in announcing its creation last October. Dr. Rice called his move "consistent with Air Force policy that space is intrinsic to the future of the Air Force, and that spacepower will assume as decisive a role in future combat operations as airpower has today."

Mr. Faga says "Amen" to that. He believes that USAF should lay claim to space as a warfighting arena and develop combat capabilities to back up that claim.

He asserts, "We need to advance our role in space, recognizing that there will always be individual space systems that the other services will be building for themselves. All the services need satellite systems to conduct unique operations.

"But that's different from having combat capability in space and being

responsible for military activity in space, which is a role that I expect the Air Force to seek, organize for, and attain.

"We need to be *the* aerospace service. We need to move now to accomplish that—not in the sense of grabbing off the role, but by forming the infrastructure and planning the strategy to build the role."

Air Force space advocates in blue suits and in mufti hailed the establishment of the space-oriented post in the upper echelons of USAF's civilian hierarchy. They saw it as evidence that Secretary Rice is picking up on space where his predecessor, Edward C. "Pete" Aldridge, Jr., left off.

As Air Force Secretary, Mr. Aldridge consistently championed space operations. He and Gen. Larry D. Welch, Air Force Chief of Staff, wrote the new Air Force space policy that went into effect a year ago.

Mr. Faga will call the shots on space within the Air Force and for the Air Force in such arenas as Capitol Hill, the Defense Department, and the intelligence community. An electrical engineer, he has long experience in the technical and techno-policy circles of all those arenas. His feel for them should serve him well in the battles over space strategies, priorities, programs, and politics that surely lie ahead.

Mr. Faga seems in good shape to answer the bell. His brief, as articulated by Secretary Rice, is nothing less than "the overall supervision of Air Force space and space-related matters, with primary emphasis on policy, strategy, and planning."

There's more. The Air Force Secretary made it clear that Mr. Faga is now his "principal advisor on space matters" and his special agent. He has instructed Mr. Faga to see to it that Air Force space systems "are responsive to the needs of all operational services," and to form "close, cooperative relationships with the Army, the Navy, and other Department of Defense and non-DoD organizations [such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration] with space-related responsibilities."

Mr. Faga does not have *carte blanche*. There are things he cannot do, such as horn in on programs that are properly the purview of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Jack Welch, and of Maj. Gen. Thomas S. Moorman, Jr., the acquisition shop's Director of Space and Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) programs.

Nonetheless, Mr. Faga has leverage in programming and budgeting by virtue of his mandate to collaborate with Air Force acquisition and financial executives. He is responsible for forging space budgets acceptable to all and for ensuring "an internally consistent and balanced space program."

Mr. Faga also serves on the Air Force Council, a heavyweight organization of top uniformed and civilian leaders that holds sway on all manner of high-priority matters. He enjoys direct access to USAF's uniformed leadership, too, thanks to what may be the most sweeping line in his charter.

It empowers him to "advise the Secretary and the Chief of Staff on space policies, plans, programs, budgets, and operations," which pretty much says it all.

"One of the things I like about having a title that specifies 'space' is that I can be completely up front about what I'm doing," Mr. Faga says. "Everybody understands where I'm coming from. I'm the space guy; I'm here for one thing—to represent space. I'm free to be its all-out advocate."

He has no illusions that space priorities and programs will always win or hold their own in competition with others more obviously oriented to airpower. "It will be interesting, taking part in [Air Force] Council meetings and other forums where C-17s, B-2s, ATFs, and the like are being discussed. I'll have to learn, but I'll need to play heavily in those discussions representing space.

"There is a lot of education about space that needs to go on inside the Air Force, and this is perfectly natural. People who have been flying bombers and fighters sometimes don't know all that much about space.

"But I find that many of them get very interested, even excited, when they learn what it's all about and what it can do for the Air Force and for military operations in general. Many senior officers with no current duties involving space are more and more attentive to space and recognize that it is now a big part of the Air Force.

"It is important for me to build on that recognition. I'm not talking about long-term planning for space as just a support service, with communications and weather and navigation data, for example, coming from satellites.

"I'm talking about planning for space control and for applying military force in space."

Mindful of moves to "demilitarize" space, such as the opposition to deploying space-based weapons planned in the SDI program and the congressional ban on further US testing of antisatellite weapons, Mr. Faga says he expects little or no slackening of the "great resistance to military capability in space of whatever sort" now evident in political and popular circles.

"But I believe that military force moves into any arena where technology permits it to go—in the form of airplanes, submarines, and now spacecraft," he declares. "That's not to say that I don't also believe in the arms-limitation process and in the attempts to build strategic stability through negotiation."

Mr. Faga emphasizes that the US should be capable of doing battle in space and that the Air Force, as the designated "aerospace service," should carry out that mission.

He describes the issue of military activity in space as "politically charged" and predicts that it will engender "a very difficult national debate, in Congress and in the public, over the next five years.

"It's the right debate to have," Mr. Faga continues, "and I expect that the going will be difficult for me on the Hill. Secretary Rice recognizes that putting 'space' behind my title is sure to draw fire."

Mr. Faga is no Johnny-come-lately to political debate or to space issues. A Capitol Hill veteran, he joined the staff of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence more than twelve years ago and has headed its Program and Budget Authorization Subcommittee staff since 1984. Among other things, he was responsible for the oversight of "technical collection" programs by means of classified systems based in space.

He has the advantage of hands-on experience with such programs.

From 1972 to 1977, he was an engineer in the CIA's Office of Development and Engineering, working on "advanced systems for intelligence collection by technical means."

Mr. Faga is in no position to comment on those experiences or on spaceborne intelligence systems that were in play, or being developed, during his years in the intelligence community. Nor can he comment on reports that he now represents the Air Force in overseeing the deployments and operations of such systems, along with counterparts from the intelligence world.

Sensors and such have been the stuff of Mr. Faga's career. A native of Bethlehem, Pa., he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering at Lehigh University. He served in the Air Force in the 1960s as a research and development officer, specializing in infrared and laser technologies for reconnaissance systems. He worked on seismic and magnetic sensors at MITRE Corp. before joining the CIA in 1972.

Mr. Faga's congressional experience should prove valuable at the Pentagon quite apart from the technical, legislative, and political insights that he gained from it. He earned a reputation on Capitol Hill for

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good work and good sense, and he rubbed elbows with more than a few members of Congress who make a difference.

One was Rep. Richard Cheney of Wyoming, a member of the House Intelligence Committee, who showed a keen interest in space.

Mr. Cheney became Secretary of Defense last March and was joined at the Pentagon in May by Dr. Rice, who had headed the RAND Corp. Almost at once, the two leaders began conferring on space plans and policy. Dr. Rice made it clear that he intended to strengthen the Air Force's commitment to space.

His first move in this regard was to reorganize his shop to sharpen its focus on space. He had inherited a secretariat in which space elements were scattered. They were being handled, in isolation or duplication, by several offices, such as those of the Assistant to the Secretary for Space Policy and the Military Assistant to the Secretary.

With Mr. Cheney's approval, Secretary Rice created the position of Assistant Secretary for Space and consolidated all space responsibilities in it. Mr. Cheney then recommended Mr. Faga's appointment to it, and President Bush followed through.

General Welch was in the picture throughout. He is said to have encouraged Secretary Rice to create Mr. Faga's post.

"The Chief of Staff has been most supportive," Mr. Faga declares. "He stands solidly behind the space policy that he and Mr. Aldridge signed late last year. He approves of this as the way to bring focus to organizing, training, and equipping the Air Force for space."

Technically, the military departments are restricted to doing just that—organizing, training, and equipping forces. They are not empowered to run the combat operations of those forces. That responsibility falls to the commanders in chief of the unified or specified warfighting commands, such as US Space Command and US European Command.

Mr. Faga acknowledges this distinction, but sees "no conflict between the proper role of the Air Force and the purposes of the Air Force in space." Referring to the CINC of US Space Command, Air Force Gen. John L. Piotrowski, Mr. Faga says, "most of the capabilities that he needs as an operational commander have got to be developed here, in the Air Force, and my job is to build support for that.

"But there will be more and more military activity in space, and I believe

that the Air Force should assert combat capability in space as an Air Force mission. We need to prepare to be the service that operates in space."

There is increasing evidence that the uniformed Air Force leadership is bent on doing so. For example, USAF's basic doctrine is being revised to put more emphasis on projecting airpower around the world from bases in the United States and to take advantage of space and space systems in the process.

The officer in charge of the doctrine's updating, Maj. Gen. Charles G. "Chuck" Boyd, USAF's Director of Plans, declares, "We can't think of the future without thinking about space, about the kinds of aerospace power that will be required. Most, if not all, of the missions that we perform in the atmosphere today we will be able to perform from space.

"We should not turn to performing them from space just to be able to say we can. However, as technologies evolve, and if they make it possible for us to do our missions more effectively and at less cost from space, then we must do so, whether those missions be close air support, interdiction, offensive counterair, defensive counterair, or whatever."

The Air Force/NASA National Aerospace Plane (NASP) program is seen as the seedbed of those technologies. It is aimed at developing a family of hypersonic aircraft/spacecraft that could vault into space from ordinary runways and perform a wide variety of combat missions.

The NASP program has been stretched to cut its costs in the short term and reduce its technical risks over the long term. Mr. Faga thinks this makes good sense.

"I talked to Dr. Rice a good bit about NASP before I came aboard," he says. "We agreed that the Air Force needs to be working on things that will affect it fifteen or twenty years into the future. But we also agreed that we don't know now—and don't need to know now—what some of these technologies will lead to.

"We know we have to be in scramjets, hypervelocity vehicles, advanced aerospace materials and structures, and advanced avionics control systems—all part of NASP. We've pushed those technologies, and we welcome and need the focus that the NASP program provides for them. But we shouldn't set specific goals for the program just yet. For example, we don't know at the moment whether a single-stage-to-orbit machine is going to make any sense.

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"We do know that all sorts of new things become possible as technology evolves, and this will be the case in space. Technology will offer new capabilities and lead to new requirements there."

Mr. Faga sees tough force-structure decisions awaiting USAF in future years as space systems and operations continue to increase in importance. To make the best use of its resources, the Air Force may someday have to choose between combat space wings and combat air wings, for example, in deciding how best to deploy both, or either, in applying "aerospace power."

"I see it coming," Mr. Faga says. "It will happen long after my time, but it's something we have to start planning for now. There's a lot of work to be done on the question of the Air Force's role in space, and on fitting that into the larger question, which is being asked at the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] level, about the role of the military in space.

"We need to begin organizing for that. Among other things, we need to build a more responsive, less expensive infrastructure for operational space launches, which is one of the

major needs that General Piotrowski emphasizes."

This need is the reason that the Air Force has tied a big blue ribbon on the Advanced Launch System (ALS) program, in which NASA is its partner. The overarching purpose of the program is to develop next-generation technologies for a new family of booster rockets. Mr. Faga calls ALS "an umbrella program for the kind of improvements that we need for quicker response on launchpads and for much lower costs per launch."

The space-launch demands projected for SDI systems in the 1990s figured heavily in the decision to embark on ALS. Some SDI systems would need to ride into space atop heavy-lift boosters such as those expected to emerge from ALS. But the Air Force needs ALS quite apart from its connection with SDI and would continue to pursue it with might and main should SDI falter.

"Heavy lift may be one reason for ALS, but there are dozens of others that have nothing to do with heavy lift," Mr. Faga declares.

The SDI program is developing several technologies and systems that the Air Force covets for future space operations, including satellites to detect and target enemy ICBMs in air and space. USAF needs less-complicated variants of such satellites for early-warning and space-surveillance purposes and is prepared to take over their development if SDI goes away.

The Air Force would also like to have an antisatellite weapon for intercepting hostile spacecraft, notably the Soviet radar satellites that would be used in wartime to target US naval forces. All the services are developing ASATs of different kinds. Congress is leery of them, and their future is uncertain.

To the Air Force, though, one thing is sure about ASATs. USAF will insist on being in charge of their battle management and command control and communications, no matter which service develops and deploys them.

This bullish approach to ASATs is in accord with USAF's newfound assertiveness on space and on its role in space, as personified by Mr. Faga.

Says he: "I believe that we must begin organizing for operations of military man in space and start looking ahead to when we'll reach that point. I also believe that almost anything we can imagine in space, we'll eventually see there, and that we must begin discussing and planning the time frame in which we'll see it." ■