

Statement for the Record

Ms. Betty Sapp

Principal Deputy Director, National Reconnaissance Office

Before the House Armed Services Committee

Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

15 March 2011

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Turner, Ranking Member Sanchez, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you today on behalf of General Bruce Carlson (USAF, Ret.), the Director, National Reconnaissance Office (DNRO), to discuss the NRO fiscal year (FY) 2012 National Defense Authorization Budget Request for National Security Space Activities. It is an honor for me to appear alongside our mission partners from the Department of Defense (DoD), Ambassador Greg Schulte, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy; the Honorable Erin Conaton, Under Secretary of the Air Force; and General William Shelton, Commander, Air Force Space Command. The NRO's close relationship and continuing partnership with our mission partners are vital to maintaining our Nation's superiority in space.

The unclassified nature of today's hearing precludes me from discussing many details of NRO programs, as well as sharing some of our greatest successes. However, I welcome the opportunity to meet in another setting to fully discuss with you the breadth and depth of NRO capabilities, partnerships, and value of the NRO contributions to our National Security.

DNRO Priorities. Since taking the helm at the NRO two years ago, Director Carlson has communicated his priorities for the NRO in a very straight-forward manner: to execute programs

on time and on budget; to improve our research and technology (R&T) investment; and to continue to invest in the foundation of our organization---to recruit, train, and retain the best people.

State of the NRO. I would like to begin with a few words about the state of the NRO today. We are nearly through the most aggressive launch campaign in over 25 years, and we are executing that campaign with a smaller launch support staff and more complex systems. We have successfully launched five satellites into orbit in the last six months, with one more launch planned next month. Our ability to sustain this tempo is due to the diligent efforts of our program teams who have successfully acquired and delivered these complex systems. It required very close coordination with the Air Force to manage the launch manifest priorities and, of course, to conduct launch operations. These successful launches have been a very important and visible reminder of the space reconnaissance mission NRO started 50 years ago, and continues with such great success today. We are committed to smart acquisition investments and practices to ensure the continued coverage and availability of our vital National Security systems and we work tirelessly to deliver these systems on time and within budget.

The NRO remains committed to using the most capable and efficient launch vehicles consistent with a need for strong

mission assurance. The health of the launch industrial base and enhancing assured access to space is essential to the success of our programs and their launch platforms. The NRO is committed to improving the launch industry, as demonstrated by the joint NRO/Air Force development of a new EELV acquisition strategy aimed at sustaining the launch industrial base while stabilizing launch costs. In addition to EELV, the NRO looks at other launch providers, such as Space Exploration Corporation (SpaceX) and Orbital Science, to evaluate their feasibility as launch providers. In fact, on 12 December 2010 and 6 February 2011 we used their Falcon-9 and Minotaur-1 to launch Cubesats and the Rapid Pathfinder vehicle respectively. We are dedicated to working with the Air Force and commercial space providers to ensure our Nation's launch and space industrial infrastructure remains strong enough to meet our mission requirements.

From launching and operating the most technically-capable systems to continued operations of legacy satellites the NRO remains the premier space reconnaissance organization in the world. The unique composition of our workforce is one of our greatest strengths. As you know, we draw our personnel from across the DoD and Intelligence Community (IC), allowing us access to the best and brightest from across the space acquisition community and to many acquisition lessons learned. The talented people of the NRO allow our significant and

continued mission success, and enable our ability to provide the very best information from the warfighter to the policymaker. Because space systems operate in an unforgiving environment where we succeed or fail, with little middle ground, the NRO continuously strives to improve and learn from all our experiences. Director Carlson and I are both confident that by continuing to leverage current successes and community workforce strengths, the NRO will continue to provide the Nation with the space reconnaissance capabilities it requires.

For the 2nd year in a row, the NRO received a Sustained Clean Audit on our Financial Statements. This positive outcome was the result of continued hard work across the NRO workforce and the culmination of a diligently planned and executed effort to continue our achievement in effective financial management. NRO's internal processes for proper funds management and accurate financial reports have been validated, and we are successfully positioned to continue to sustain this clean audit into the future.

EVOLUTIONARY ACQUISITION

Maintaining a healthy space industrial base, coupled with delivering programs on cost and schedule, is a matter of critical importance to our national security. Evolutionary acquisition practices, used successfully for decades by the NRO, can help us sustain our industrial base in the future. We can

also leverage and extend our acquisition success by institutionalizing proven best practices. A careful look at many of our past successful programs reveal common threads such as leveraging proven designs and platforms, and introducing payload enhancements incrementally into the proven platform. In addition, committing to "block buys" or multi-vehicle procurements is much more efficient than single vehicle buys and can result in savings.

We will continue to implement evolutionary acquisition techniques using proven best practices to control costs and achieve reliable and consistent acquisition results. We will use "block buys" or multi-vehicle purchases for production stability, coupled with investments in new capabilities, to sustain factory and satellite constellation health and to improve efficiency. The evolutionary acquisition practices could help stabilize our industrial base and allow us to acquire satellites more efficiently.

NRO SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL SPACE POLICY

The NRO continues to support the Intelligence Community and the Department of Defense in the formulation of national level policies and strategies including the 2010 National Space Policy and the 2011 National Security Space Strategy. Our policy and strategy experts were instrumental in developing and negotiating key principles, objectives, and approaches that furthered U.S.

National Security interests and balanced IC and DOD space activities. These cornerstone documents will help posture the Nation for the congested, contested, and competitive space environment while enhancing the strategic National Security advantages space capabilities provide. As we collectively move forward with the implementation of these important policies and strategies, the NRO will continue to work with the Interagency and our IC and DOD partners to develop and apply advanced space capabilities; guide cooperative ventures; assure critical national security space-enabled missions; pursue integrated space and cross-domain solutions; and enhance our space industrial base.

NRO CONTRIBUTIONS: CRITICAL TO THE FIGHT

Lastly, I would like to highlight the real bottom line for the NRO---our support to the warfighter. Almost a decade after the attacks of September 11th, NRO systems and people continue to make significant contributions each and every day to ongoing operations around the globe. The NRO currently has over 55 personnel deployed around the globe in direct support of the warfighter, and we continue to rapidly adapt to the needs and changing pace of our deployed forces.

For example, several months ago in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Operations, operators were made aware of an impending ambush on unidentified coalition troops but were not

able to pinpoint the location of the attack. The NRO used a Communications Intelligence (COMINT) system called COMINT External Geo-Fusion System (CEGS) to assist. The NRO's CEGS capability is used to rapidly tip warfighters to threats and enable quick reaction, to provide tailored intelligence collection, and to enhance force protection. On this day CEGS was able to rapidly provide a geo-location which allowed reinforcements to arrive at the scene prior to the ambush and call in Close Air Support, which resulted in neutralizing 20 insurgents. CEGS and its NRO operators were credited with saving coalition lives that day. This is the type of success the NRO strives for each and every day. We are committed to the fight from 22,000 miles above to the men and women we have on the ground supporting our regional commanders.

The NRO also continues to focus on expanding access to NRO products and services, improving the content of NRO informational products, and reducing the amount of time it takes to get relevant data to the warfighter. The NRO is concentrating on developing new capabilities for warfighters, operators, and intelligence analysts. We are focused on support to Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) efforts, Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (C-UAS) efforts, and communications infrastructure and technology solutions designed to support "find, fix, and finish" operations. A prime example of this is

the NRO project "RED DOT." This system went operational in Iraq after it was rapidly developed, tested, and fielded in just over a year. Now RED DOT is scheduled for deployment to Afghanistan this summer. RED DOT leverages reduced processing timelines that the NRO has been aggressively pursuing, and more efficiently moves time-sensitive intelligence data to the commanders on the ground, by semi-automatically passing indications and warnings data from national systems down to tactical vehicles at the unclassified level. This results in increased force protection and serves as a pathfinder for delivering other national systems data down to the soldier in harm's way.

In addition to rapidly developing and deploying capabilities in support of the warfighter, the NRO is also proactively involved with pre-deployment training and education initiatives throughout DoD and the IC. NRO personnel describe our system capabilities as part of the core curriculum at the Army's Intelligence Center of Excellence at Fort Huachuca, Arizona; and our Mobile Training Teams have provided both the Army's I Corps and III Corps with relevant training on National Intelligence capabilities available to the unit in theater. We recognize we can't be everywhere, but we can train our soldiers about the unique capabilities they can draw upon in a time of crisis.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for your support and I encourage you to take time to come out to the NRO for detailed discussions we could not have today.

The NRO vision is to maintain "Vigilance From Above." We remain focused on our mission to provide "Innovative Overhead Intelligence Systems for National Security," and the people of the NRO embody our core values of Integrity and Accountability, Teamwork Built on Respect and Diversity, and Mission Excellence. Driven by our extraordinary people, the NRO will continue on the path of delivering acquisition and operations excellence, as well as the unparalleled innovation that is the hallmark of our history and the foundation of our future.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I thank you for your continued support of the NRO, and I stand ready to answer your questions.