

FULCRUM GLOBAL



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INTELLIGENCE BRIEF # 9

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SUBJECT: Chinese Threat to United States Space Assets

COUNTRY/REGION: Outer Space/Global

BACKGROUND OF SUBJECT:

In 1996, former Premier of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Li Peng declared space to be critical for the PRC's national defense and economic growth. This new initiative began the process of putting China onto a road leading to communication and navigation independence from foreign assets. This initiative also set the path for other space assets to enhance national defense and open the way for China to enter the space market place. Since the time of the Peng era, the Chinese space program has exploded and is now in competition with the United States in space stations, as well as missions to the Moon and Mars. In a recent announcement the PRC government designated aerospace a top priority and military leaders hope to secure full use of outer space for China and deny the United States (U.S.) access to their orbital and ground space assets.

CUSTOMER QUESTIONS:

1. Does China present a threat to United States space assets and dominance?
2. When did China become a threat to United States space assets and dominance?
3. What is the threat to United States space assets and dominance?
4. How can those threats affect United states space assets and dominance?

CURRENT ASSESSMENT;

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is performing an aggressive acquisition policy, primarily through industrial espionage within the United States and its allies to obtain space assets. This approach by the CCP is an attempt to ensure the PRC's dominance of space and deny the U.S. access to space and its space assets. This assessment is backed by observing the space assets the Chinese Communist Party is acquiring. The PRC space capabilities have grown significantly and have reached a point where it not only poses a threat to U.S. space assets, but also the ground-based assets used for space. They have the Long March family of launch vehicles, a capable satellite communication system, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) satellites, missile warning satellites, and a Space Situational Awareness (SSA) system. In addition, they have also fielded a global positioning system (GPS). Along with these assets, the PRC have been developing as well as successfully testing an anti-satellite system. Very recently the PRC have launched a space plane that happens to be very similar to the United States X-37B. This vehicle is in orbit at the time of this analysis. It has deployed at least six objects in orbit and the nature of these objects is currently unknown.

China's Long March family of rockets gives them the independence of launching without depending on other nations, specifically the United States. Their robust set of communication satellites allows them to ensure communication with their ground units anywhere in the world without having to use United States assets for this function. Their own set of GPS satellites allows them independence from the United States to navigate their military anywhere at any time. The PRC had previously utilized the U.S. GPS satellite system prior to establishing their own GPS. Their ISR capability allows them to look in on what the United States is doing, specifically military operations, and does allow them space based SSA.

The PRC has also developed ground based SSA capabilities that not just allow them to see what is going on in orbit but can allow counter space operations to occur as well. Their Anti-Satellite (ASAT) capability has proven itself functional and shows us that they can remove our space assets at any time. The Chinese version of the United States X-37B is of great concern especially since we have observed it dispatching objects into orbit. These objects could be a wide assortment of things, but space mines are considered being one of the biggest possibilities and concerns. With Low Earth Orbit so crowded with satellites, the PRC could use an ASAT, or space mine to take out a few satellites. Also, the debris field that would be produced could start to take out countless numbers of other satellites without firing another shot. This event would cause the debris field to escalate and grow at a rate that would remove several additional satellites.

ANALYSIS OF ASSESSMENT:

When one looks at China's space policy, doctrine, and strategy, it is apparent that the Chinese Communist Party believes space to be the next environment for global domination and economic power. Although China officially voices the peaceful use of space and is pursuing

agreements with the United Nations for the non-weaponization of space, their space policy, doctrine and strategy point in a direction opposite of their rhetoric. Lastly, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), views their space capabilities as being absolutely vital to the development of a modern military with the capability to fight a modern war as they believe these assets will increase their national standing.

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