Extracted from "Commercial Space Protection Tri-Seal Strategic Framework"

Effective 12 July 2023, signed by Gen James Dickinson, Commander, U.S. Space Command; Vice Admiral Frank Whitworth, Director, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency; and Dr. C. J. Scolese, Director, National Reconnaissance Office

Executive Summary

This document defines the framework for United States Space Command (USSPACECOM), National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), and National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) collaboration in order to better enable protection of commercial remote sensing space assets vital to the intelligence collection mission. For the purposes of this framework, commercial satellite protection and defense refers to mitigating or reducing harm to commercial satellites through information sharing or other appropriate measures. Commercial space capabilities provide the Intelligence Community (IC) and Department of Defense (DoD) an increase in collection capacity, agility, speed, and resilience in order to address the growing demand for information from national decision makers, the warfighter, and allies and partners.

The Commercial Space Protection Tri-Seal Strategic Framework defines the roles and responsibilities of USSPACECOM, NGA, and NRO in three critical areas: threat information sharing, anomaly investigation and response, and collection strategies. Threat information sharing between the U.S. Government and the commercial sector creates a better understanding of the space domain in general and the threats to collection assets specifically. Anomaly reporting, investigation, and response are needed to inform appropriate and timely actions in the face of current and emerging threats. Commercial imagery collection strategies may need to be adjusted if threats require a change to commercial collection postures. By delineating roles and responsibilities in these areas, the signatories can ensure their organizations are effectively identifying, assessing, and adapting to threats against commercial imagery collection.

Through defined roles and responsibilities, the organizations can ensure that NRO-contracted commercial imagery providers are properly informed of emergent and imminent threats to their space assets, enabling the providers to make informed decisions to best support collection operations and benefit providers in their support of U.S. Government (USG) and non-governmental customers. As the contract holder and a responsible agent for the research, development, acquisition, launch, and operations of overhead reconnaissance systems, NRO acquires commercial data and remote sensing imagery to help satisfy the mission requirements of the DoD, the IC, and other USG entities. In coordination with NGA, NRO establishes acquisition approaches in response to mission requirements and awards contracts with established requirements to commercial providers to ensure operational continuity and enterprise integration of commercial data.

NGA, in its functional management role for Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT), is the nation's authority for GEOINT tasking, analysis, and collection requirements formulation. When conditions and threats could potentially affect the operations of NRO-contracted commercial imagery providers, NGA will lead GEOINT assessments of suspected incidents as appropriate and will generate GEOINT reporting to contribute to assessments on adversarial capabilities, methods, and intent. NGA is responsible for commercial remote sensing tasking and requirements

adjudication, prioritization, and deconfliction for commercial imagery providers on contract with NRO. NGA processes and exploits imagery, produces reports, and disseminates data to the IC and DoD. Upon notification or indication of a threat to commercial space-based satellites, NGA will adjust collection tasking as warranted, assess whether to limit immediate U.S. requests for collection in the threat area in order to mitigate impact to commercial systems, and monitor activities or indications of similar events impacting other commercial satellites or national overhead systems.

USSPACECOM is the combatant command that conducts operations in, from, and to space to defend U.S. vital interests alongside allies and partners. USSPACECOM will lead threat information sharing with NRO-contracted commercial imagery providers and the NRO Operations Center (NOC) for space events, counterspace attack, and USSPACECOM warning problems. USSPACECOM will also lead investigations into anomalies reported by commercial imagery providers, in coordination with NGA, NRO, and other USG elements, as appropriate. When discussed in this framework, threat information pertains to activity demonstrated or capabilities developed by an adversary that could adversely affect operations of a commercial imagery satellite, or a known intent and opportunity by an adversary to affect operations of a commercial imagery satellite. Beyond appropriate protection of classified national security information, this framework is not intended to limit the sort of information that could be made available to NRO-contracted commercial imagery providers regarding the safety of their space systems. USSPACECOM is responsible for the overall disclosure and release of threat information and will use established processes to obtain original classification authority (OCA) approvals. USSPACECOM will establish unclassified and, as practicable, classified means of communication with NRO-contracted commercial imagery providers (in accordance with their appropriate clearances) to provide information 24/7, consistent with terms in NRO contracts. Additionally, USSPACECOM will share and be available to discuss detailed and robust counterspace threat information with NRO-contracted commercial imagery providers to aid NRO and commercial provider long-term planning, concepts of operations (CONOPS), and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) development.

In accordance with this agreement, each participant can establish the means necessary to ensure that NRO-contracted commercial imagery providers are aware of, and can plan for, the threats caused by a more congested and contested space environment. In order to implement this framework, the signatories agree to develop and implement CONOPS that enable threat information sharing; anomaly reporting, investigations, and responses; and collection strategies in order to mitigate risks and threats to satellites operated by NRO-contracted commercial imagery providers.