

What is a “Space Force”?

Fast Facts

The concept of a **Space Force**, or a military branch specifically focused on outer space, received national attention when President Trump voiced his support for the project in June 2018 at the National Space Council.

What would need to happen to create a space force? What would it do? And what would the cost be?

- The United States does not currently have a Space Force. If created, it would be the sixth branch of the U.S. military.
- The part of the Air Force that currently oversees military-focused space capabilities is called the **Air Force Space Command**.
- The **U.S. Space Command** (1985–2002) was formerly in charge of coordinating the business of the Armed Forces in space. A new role for the U.S. Space Command is pending congressional approval, with John W. Raymond nominated to be Commander and a short list of potential headquarters appointed by the Air Force.
- To create a Space Force:
 - The **Department of Defense** in the Pentagon was tasked with preparing information to present to Congress.
 - The information the **Pentagon** released included several estimates of what a Space Force would cost to create depending on how separate from other military powers it would be. It also included how many personnel would be taken from other military branches and addressed issues that would need to be resolved in legislation. Their report was released May 8, 2019.
 - The House of Representatives would have to review and pass legislation approving the Space Force as well as a budget to run it. The plan would have to include what duties the Space Force would have, because other branches of the military, such as the Air Force, already have some responsibilities in space. It would also need to address who is eligible from other branches of the military to apply to the Space Force.
 - The Senate would then have to approve the plan the House has voted for and approved. If rejected by the Senate, the plan can go back to the House for changes. The plan can go back and forth between the two houses until both agree and vote to approve it.
 - The President would then need to sign his approval of the Congress approved plan to create the Space Force.
 - Congress would have to pass laws changing Title 10 of the United States Code and relieving other military branches of space duties and transferring power to the Space Force (unless created within the Air Force).

- The U.S., along with other world powers, signed **The Outer Space Treaty of 1967**. The U.S. has agreed not to place any weapons of mass destruction or nuclear weapons in space, including in orbit around Earth, and not to build military bases or test weapons on other planets. The agreement does *not*, however, forbid use of other weapons in open space or on space stations. The agreement also states no country can claim exclusive territory in space.
- A Space Force would have to obey all rules of international law, just like in international waters. Agreements such as the Geneva Convention apply in space.
- What a Space Force would do wouldn't be specifically defined until legislation is decided on. Some commonly addressed ideas are to keep other world powers from damaging or disrupting U.S. satellites and counteracting intercontinental ballistic missiles.
- The **Congressional Budget Office** estimates that if a new military branch is created, it will cost between \$1.1 billion to \$1.5 billion a year. If incorporated into the Air Force as currently planned, the estimated cost is \$820 million to \$1.3 billion per year. These numbers do not include initial setup costs, which range from 1.1 billion to 3.24 billion (not adjusted for future inflation).

SOURCES

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