

BRIEFING ROOM

FACT SHEET: Vice President Harris Advances National Security Norms in Space

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New U.S. Commitment on Destructive Direct-Ascent Anti-Satellite Missile Testing

Today at Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, Vice President Kamala Harris announced that the United States commits not to conduct destructive, direct-ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) missile testing, and that the United States seeks to establish this as a new international norm for

responsible behavior in space. The Vice President also called on other nations to make similar commitments and to work together in establishing this as a norm, making the case that such efforts benefit all nations.

At the Biden-Harris Administration's first National Space Council meeting in December, Vice President Harris tasked the National Security Council staff to work with the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and other national security agencies to develop proposals for national security space norms that advance U.S. interests and preserve the security and sustainability of space. The commitment announced today is the first initiative under this effort. The United States is the first nation to make such a declaration.

This commitment addresses one of the most pressing threats to the security and sustainability of space, as demonstrated by Russia's November 2021 destructive direct ascent ASAT missile test. The People's Republic of China conducted a similar test in

2007. The destruction of space objects through direct-ascent ASAT missile testing is reckless and irresponsible. The long-lived debris created by these tests now threaten satellites and other space objects that are vital to all nations' security, economic, and scientific interests, and increases risk to astronauts in space. Overall, these tests jeopardize the long-term sustainability of outer space and imperil the exploration and use of space by all nations.

Developing a shared understanding of what constitutes safe and responsible space activities contributes to a more stable space environment by reducing the risk of miscommunication and miscalculation. This is especially important as there is an ever-increasing number of states and non-governmental entities that rely on space services and space assets which are vulnerable to debris.

This new commitment also protects U.S. interests in space. Meaningfully reducing ASAT testing and debris

generation advances U.S. national security interests and protects long-term U.S. interests in space exploration, space science, and space-enabled economic development.

Conflict or confrontation in outer space is not inevitable, and the United States seeks to ensure outer space remains free from conflict. The Biden-Harris Administration had made clear that the United States will engage the international community to uphold and strengthen a rules-based international order for space. The United States, working with commercial industry, allies, and partners, will lead in the development of new measures that contribute to the safety, stability, security, and long-term sustainability of space activities.

Overall, through this new commitment and other actions, the United States will demonstrate how space activities can be conducted in a responsible, peaceful, and sustainable manner.

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