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## China Working Group: China, Space, and Strategy

Eisenhower Center for Space and Defense Studies

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## **China Working Group: China, Space, and Strategy**

**Eisenhower Center for Space and Defense Studies  
School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Air University**

**Keystone, Colorado, June 2007**

Chinese advances in its space program in recent years has led to a growing international interest in the implications of Chinese programs in the civil, military, and commercial space sectors. This workshop, sponsored by the United States (U.S.) Air Force Academy Eisenhower Center for Space and Defense Studies and the Air University School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, brought together a community of experts and policy-makers to discuss the implications of current and future Chinese space developments on space policy and law, in particular the Chinese anti-satellite (ASAT) test conducted in January 2007.

Thirty-five individuals attended the workshop, including, among others, Major General Armor of the National Security Space Office, Dick Buenneke of the State Department (State), Tom Reich representing the East Asia Bureau of State, Hong Yuan of the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Studies in Beijing, Wu Chunsi of the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, Dean Cheng of the Office of Naval Analysis, who acted as a translator when need for the Chinese nationals, and representatives from Europe, aerospace companies like Lockheed Martin, and leading academic scholars and consultants in space policy and space law. The one-day workshop focused on both military and commercial aspects of the U.S.-Chinese relationship in space. It was conducted under Chatham House rules, which forbid citing specific comments made by the participants.

In general, it was my impression from the statements made during the day, as I said in my summation at the end of the session, that the U.S. side was leaning well forward, ready to engage more actively at any sign that the Chinese were willing to be forthcoming. There was little to sign of a positive response from the Chinese side, although there was a statement to the effect that, in the "opinion" of the speaker, there will be no further ASAT tests of any kind, at least

through 2012. It is safe to say that U.S. officials at the meeting were skeptical about this assurance.

Of note, was the revelation that the Chinese scholars viewed U.S. actions the past decade with much suspicion and even threatening to China's national interests. In this regard, the Chinese nationals directly pointed to the U.S. unwillingness to cooperate with the Chinese in civil and commercial space, U.S. actions like the "inadvertent" bombing of the Chinese embassy during the war in Kosovo, and the emerging doctrine of counterspace operations in the U.S. that is also reflected in the 2006 Bush national space policy. It was mentioned by the Chinese scholars that these events encouraged the Chinese to undertake a path to developing comprehensive space power capabilities. The ASAT test of January 2007 conducted by the Chinese was viewed internally as routine test along this path

The Chinese scholars also emphasized the importance of language. For example, the talk of "transparency," which is an important idea that U.S. officials stress to the Chinese, as the word is translated into Mandarin, has overtones of espionage, and therefore, would not elicit a positive response. This pointed to the need for more involvement by Chinese linguists in formulating our policy statements on China space; one term suggested at the workshop was "clarity of intent."

On the question of Chinese decision-making, the Chinese nationals emphasized that the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) reported up separate communication channels to the Supreme Council and that there was no direct communication between the two entities. Further, the thinking among the Chinese scholars was that the PLA is quite insular and there was not enough attention paid to the international implications of the Chinese ASAT test. The implication is that the test is not something that the MFA would likely not have suggested.

There seemed as well to be a consensus that the U.S. reaction to the ASAT test had been relatively moderate, that the US was ready for more dialogue, and that by “transparency” in our policy statements what seemed to be meant was a desire for more clarity of intent in space on the part of the Chinese. In my conversations with Mr. Yuan, I suggested that as a gesture of goodwill the Chinese might want to host a similar Space Working Group meeting next year. He responded that it would be a useless exercise, since the Chinese participants would not dare to speak frankly at such a meeting. Finally, the American military participants emphasized that they had a policy directive in the Bush Space Policy to push for greater engagement, including with the Chinese, on space issues, and that this is what they intended to do.

The Chinese scholars conveyed that it is in fact the Chinese willingness to demonstrate space power that creates opportunities for dialogue with the U.S. The key is that the U.S. does not, and thus needs to, view China as a “legitimate” power. Moreover, the Chinese nationals stated that China desires to be a responsible player in world affairs.

This workshop was second annual China Working Group meeting and the first to include Chinese nationals and the U.S. State Department. The meeting represents a possible channel for discussions, what is being called by State Track 1.5 as distinct from Track 2. It also strengthened the Eisenhower Center’s working relationship with State, our contacts in China and with the Chinese community, and our relationships among scholars and think-tanks.

**Ambassador Roger Harrison and Dr. Eligar Sadeh  
Eisenhower Center for Space and Defense Studies**