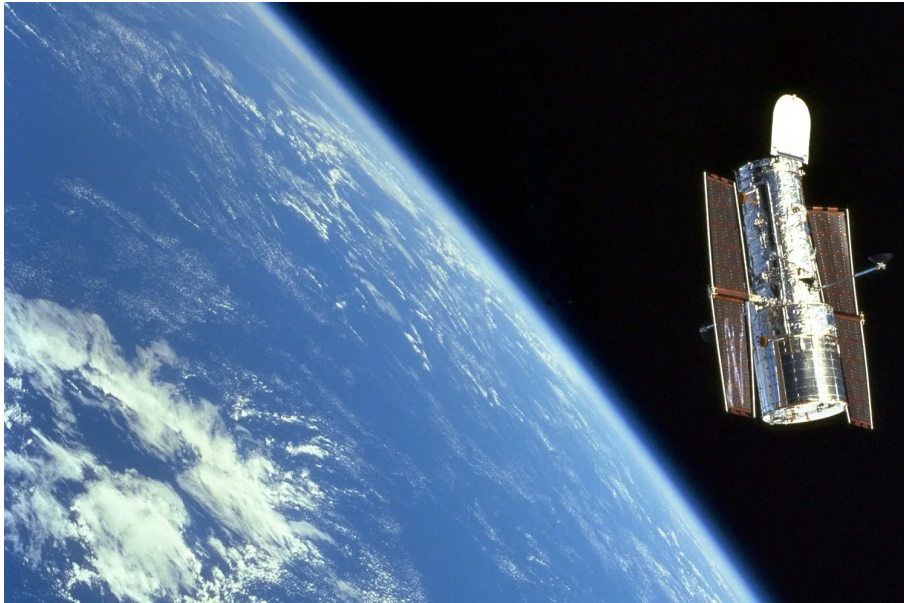




Space as an Operational Domain: NATO's Strategy for Collective Security

Published on 06/07/2026

Space is no longer just a scientific frontier, but a **critical operational domain** for the security of the Atlantic Alliance, on par with land, air, sea, and cyberspace. In an increasingly competitive and congested global context, NATO has taken decisive measures to protect space infrastructure and ensure the resilience of its operations.

Why is space fundamental for NATO?

Modern dependence on space technology is total. Without access to space, NATO's deterrence and defense capabilities would be severely compromised. The space domain enables vital security functions, including:

- **Navigation and Timing (PNT):** Essential for precision operations, force tracking, and search and rescue.
- **Early warning:** Fundamental monitoring for missile launch detection.
- **Secure communications:** Ensure constant command and control during missions.

- **Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR):** Crucial for situational awareness and strategic decision-making.

Today, over half of the active satellites in orbit belong to NATO members or companies based within the Alliance's territory, making the protection of these assets an absolute priority.

A Changing Environment: New Challenges and Threats

Space has become a **contested** environment. While access was once limited to a few superpowers, technological progress has lowered entry barriers. This democratization of space brings opportunities but also significant risks:

1. **Anti-satellite technologies:** Russia and China have developed capabilities to disrupt, blind, or destroy satellites, threatening the Alliance's freedom of maneuver.
2. **Congestion and debris:** The exponential growth of space traffic increases the risk of collisions and degrades the operational environment.
3. **Vulnerability:** The threat of hacking, jamming, or, in extreme cases, the militarization of space poses new challenges to the protection of civilian and military infrastructure.

In this scenario, NATO has made it clear that **attacks towards, from, or within space** can be considered a threat to the Alliance's security and could lead to the invocation of **Article 5**.



NATO's Key Initiatives

To maintain technological advantage and resilience, NATO is implementing a multi-pronged strategy:

1. Command and Control

The **NATO Space Operations Centre (NSpOC)**, located in Ramstein (Germany), serves as a hub for coordinating information exchange and supporting NATO commanders with essential space data.

2. Partnership with the commercial sector

The **Commercial Space Strategy**, approved in 2025, marks a shift: NATO aims to increasingly integrate commercial solutions, creating a synergistic link with the private industry through the **SPACENET** network and the support of the Industrial Advisory Group (NIAG).

3. Large Multinational Projects

The Alliance is investing in cutting-edge infrastructure:

- **APSS (Alliance Persistent Surveillance from Space):** The largest multinational investment in NATO's history. Includes the virtual constellation "Aquila," aimed at constantly monitoring terrestrial activities.
- **NSS6G:** A plan exceeding 1 billion euros for 6th generation satellite communications.
- **3SAS:** The strategic system for space situational awareness (Space Situational Awareness).
- **NORTHLINK and STARLIFT:** Projects to ensure resilient communications in the Arctic and rapid launch capabilities across allied territory.

"NATO does not intend to place weapons in space. The Alliance supports responsible behavior, respect for international law, and the protection of the peaceful use of space for all humanity."

Towards the Future

From the adoption of the *Overarching Space Policy* in 2019 to the creation of the *Space Centre of Excellence* in Toulouse, NATO has radically transformed its approach. The integration of space into exercise plans and technological innovation confirms that the security of the future is literally played out above our heads.