Space Force 2040: 30,000 Guardian Satellites of Space

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COLORADO SPRINGS – At the recent Space Symposium, the U.S. Space Force outlined its future through two strategic documents: **"Objective Force 2040"** and **"Future Operating Environment 2040"**. The vision presented by General Chance Saltzman, who is nearing retirement, describes a radically transformed space domain where American technological superiority will be tested by growing threats and AI-driven technologies.

The Threat: China and Russia towards 2040

The document on the operating environment clearly identifies the main adversaries, while hypothesizing that no global conflicts capable of altering the current state order (such as a direct clash over Taiwan or Ukraine) will erupt before 2040.

- **China:** Beijing is expected to develop integrated space-to-earth operations enhanced by artificial intelligence on a global scale. By 2040, China could manage about **21,000 satellites** (compared to the current approximately 1,600), investing massively in LEO

constellations for communications and sophisticated counter-space weapons.

- **Russia:** Moscow will not seek numerical parity but will focus on **asymmetric capabilities**. The main concern is the development of nuclear anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, given that the Russian doctrine presents the lowest threshold in the world for the use of atomic warheads.

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A Crowded Orbit: 30,000 U.S. Satellites

The growth of the commercial and governmental sector will lead to a demographic explosion in orbit. The Space Force estimates that the United States will manage over **30,000 satellites** by 2040, a huge leap from the 12,000 operational today.

> *"The Space Force of 2040 will be fundamentally different from today's. It will rely on resilient and proliferated architectures that integrate military, commercial, and allied capabilities into a hybrid combat system."*

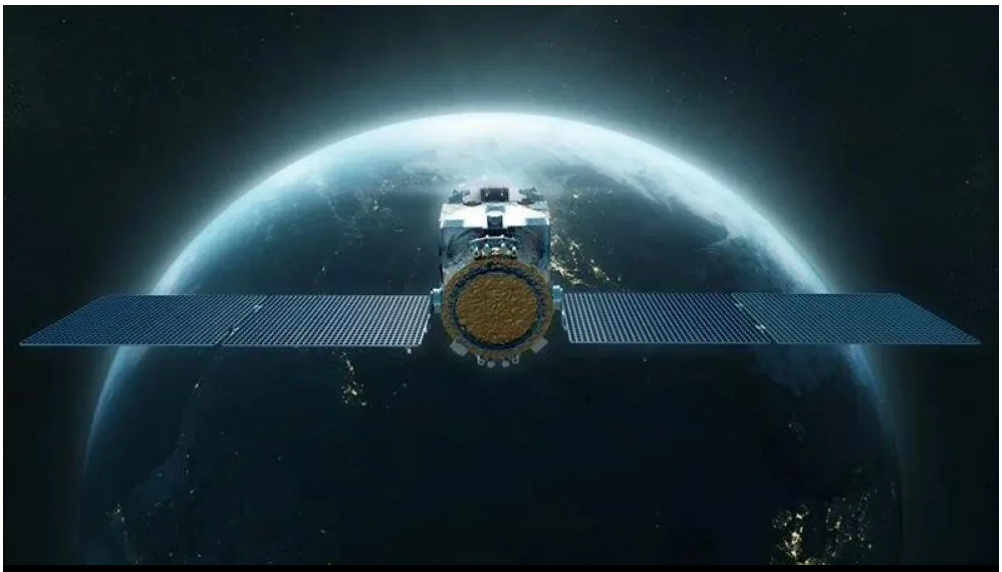
The Strategy: Expansion and Automation

To face this scenario, General Saltzman emphasized the need for a significant increase in budget and personnel:

1. **Growth of Personnel:** A doubling of the number of "Guardians" has been requested over the next ten years to manage new targeting, command and control, and battle damage

assessment missions.

2. **Reorganization:** The service will shift from an "effects"-based organization to a **"platforms"**-based one, ensuring more mobile and rapidly deployable forces.
3. **Technology and Allies:** While satellite control units may see a reduction in personnel thanks to **automation**, the Space Force will increasingly rely on AI and international partnerships (AUKUS, NATO, alliances with Japan and South Korea) to maintain deterrence.



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The Legacy of Saltzman

This announcement marks one of General Saltzman's last acts. Under his command, the Space Force's budget increased from 26 billion to nearly **72 billion dollars** in just three years, consolidating its essential role in joint operations, as recently demonstrated in operational theaters in Iran and Venezuela.

The goal is clear: to transform the Space Force into an entity capable of operating at "machine speed," while preserving the primacy of human judgment in critical decisions.