



Military

# U.S. Air Force and Space Force to realign priorities

Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall: Changes are needed for the era of “great power competition”

Sandra Erwin February 12, 2024



(from left to right) Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall, acting under secretary Kristyn Jones, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Allvin and Chief of Space Operations Gen. Chance Saltzman speak at the Air & Space Forces Association's warfare symposium Feb. 12, 2024. Credit: AFA livestream

WASHINGTON — The Department of the Air Force on Feb. 12 unveiled a **long-term vision to revamp** personnel, operations, and technology efforts with the goal of reshaping the Air Force and newly formed Space Force to concentrate resources squarely on strategic competition with China.

Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall said priorities have to change for the era of great power competition. Service leaders discussed a planned series of initiatives during a panel at the Air & Space Forces Association's Warfare Symposium in Aurora, Colorado.

Great power competition generally refers to the geopolitical rivalry between the United States and China. This competition encompasses not just military might, but also economic influence and technological advancement. China's rapid military modernization and assertive foreign policy have placed it at the forefront of this competition, prompting the U.S. to re-evaluate its own strategic posture.

Kendall said the Air Force and Space Force will streamline operations and prioritize critical areas like technology integration, cyber expertise, and software development, all to ensure the Air Force and Space Force are prepared for the complex challenges of the 21st century.

The announcement comes as the Pentagon seeks to move on from legacy structures optimized for counterterrorism operations that dominated since 9/11, and prioritize what it now labels **“integrated deterrence”** against major rivals like China and Russia.

China’s growing arsenal of long-range missiles and anti-satellite weapons, in particular, threatens American supremacy in areas like air combat and space-enabled intelligence, Kendall has pointed out.

He described the overhaul as a multi-year endeavor but said there is no time to waste. “We are out of time,” Kendall stressed.

### **Space Force priorities**

Chief of Space Operations Gen. Chance Saltzman compared the journey ahead for the Space Force to that of a merchant marine that needs to be more like a navy.

Speaking at the AFA conference, Saltzman said the service will introduce training and education programs tailored for an area when space is a contested, not a benign, environment.

In decades past, he said, “the space domain was relatively secure, it was pretty safe. And our job was to provide services to the joint force from that domain ... And now we find ourselves in a contested domain. We have to be able to secure the domain so that we can continue to use it and protect the joint force from space-enabled targeting.”

Training programs have to change, said Saltzman. “We have to be able to give our people the training, the education, the experiences that they’re going to need to be successful in the high tech environment that they’re going to face.”

The Space Force will redesign its officer training course so programs for satellite operations, cyber operations and intelligence are not separated into stovepipes. “If the satellite operator doesn’t understand the networks that disseminate the data and doesn’t understand how to provide that data in a threat environment, they are not going to be successful,” said Saltzman.

On the procurement side, there will be greater focus on resiliency against threats, he said. “The merchant marine didn’t have the right equipment to be a navy. Likewise, the systems that we’ve built were designed for a benign environment. We have to redesign our architectures, redesign the systems so they are resilient against an adversary, they have to be resilient under attack.”

### **‘Space Futures Command’**

Saltzman said the Space Force will establish a Space Futures Command as a new field command to develop concepts, conduct experimentation and wargames.

This new command also will look at what technologies should be developed or acquired to defend space, asking questions such as what type of space domain awareness will be needed for cislunar space, beyond Earth's orbit.

"We are going to build a wargaming center that helps us evaluate technologies and experiment with new technologies," he said.



**Sandra Erwin**

Sandra Erwin writes about military space programs, policy, technology and the industry that supports this sector. She has covered the military, the Pentagon, Congress and the defense industry for nearly two decades as editor of NDIA's National Defense...

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**LaurenaDevon** 9 months ago

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**TheRadicalModerate** 9 months ago

We're booting up a classic escalation cycle. I know why we're doing it, and I can't see what else we can do. However, I worry that this is all too abstract for cooler heads to prevail.

When we got into a nuclear arms race with the Russians, everybody was acutely aware that actually executing what we were preparing was literally the end of the world. The execution of a space war doesn't kill tens of millions of people. But it does end with a debris disk in LEO that precludes humanity's ability to access the wealth and energy that global society needs to survive.

*Si vis pacem, para bellum.* But you also need to wield every bit of soft power and diplomacy at your disposal. Preparation is only half of the equation. We're not talking to the other side. That's alarming.

3 1 Reply

**화성의 태양** 9 months ago [→ TheRadicalModerate](#)


It's going to end well before it's gotten underway, as in, there will be no Star Wars fantasy scenario for anyone to worry about. Dream on, because that's all it was ever going to be.

0 0 Reply

**Lucky** 9 months ago [→ TheRadicalModerate](#)

"We're not talking to the other side."  
 Can you keep talking to a pathological liar and deceiver or trickster?!  
 Yes, you can. But you are at a net disadvantage.  
 Investing in Russia and China, helping them to build strong economy, advance technology, training and teaching their kids at the best Universities in the West is resulting, undoubtedly, in building your own Society's destroyer.

As long as their only scope is destruction of the Free World your good intentions are increasingly becoming moot.


0 1 Reply 



**화성의 태양**  Lucky

9 months ago edited

Who sre the deceivers and tricksters? The people who genetically engineered HIV and who likely paid foreign scientists to engineer COVID? The people who staged a false flag attack against their own as a pretext to invading two foreign countries and turning their own society into a gestapoesque police state? The people who are so hungry for control and power that they're delusional enough to believe and actually try to dominate the Moon and even Mars? The list goes on, but would you be surprised to know these people responsible for the above atrocities and insanity are all from one country acting in coordination with one or two of its closest 'allies'? That country isn't Russia or China, by the way...

0 0 Reply 



**TheRadicalModerate**  Lucky

9 months ago

Nobody said it was easy. But you don't make peace with your friends. Having honest people as opponents has never been a precondition for diplomacy.

As long as their only scope is destruction of the Free World your good intentions are increasingly becoming moot.

This is just silly. Their goal is to be a great power, because it makes them prosperous and domestically content, which keeps the bosses in power. Destruction or weakening of the West may be a *means* to that goal, but only an idiot would have that as their actual objective.

0 1 Reply 



**TomDPerkins #Omelas**  TheRadicalModerate

9 months ago

"Their goal is to be a great power, because it makes them prosperous and domestically content," <-- No, their *goal* is to be a great power with the trappings of that -- taking territory and imposing their will on other nations -- because that distracts from the reasons for an absence of prosperity and domestic content. If you prefer for what I refer there to be their *goals* as being the *means* towards the bosses staying in power, fine -- it remains that no part of that is acceptable to us or should be.

And talking will not change that either.

1 0 Reply 



**TheRadicalModerate**  TomDPerkins #Omelas

9 months ago

I hate that I can't write anything sufficiently convincing to explain how wrong you are, because your attitude is genuinely dangerous.

Wars start because states don't understand each other well enough to find a win-win solution. Military deterrence is essential, because everybody understands what a lose-lose situation looks like. But when you *assume* that you *know* what the other guy is thinking, and what he needs, then you can convince yourself--wrongly--that he's implacable. Then the lose/lose-not-quite-so-much scenarios seem like nice simple solutions. And then members of your family start dying.

So you talk and you talk and you talk. You do it at a low level, so nobody goes grandstanding about how the other side is so desperate to negotiate that they

must be weak. But you keep doing it, because it's essential to finally understanding that there's a way for both sides to get enough of what they want that they don't have to kill each other.

It doesn't always work. It's *always* boring, which is a problem in a society that wants drama 24/7, and where everybody thinks they're an expert, who knows the simple obvious solution to what's really a complex problem with only complex, partial solutions. But it's essential to avoiding war.

0 1 Reply 



**TomDPerkins #Omelas**   TheRadicalModerate

9 months ago edited

No, imagining the best thing that can happen is avoiding a war that should be had if the enemy so chooses is genuinely dangerous; if you decide to engage later, you do so from a worse position as a general rule – or – in never waging it you concede completely.


"Wars start because states don't understand each other well enough to find a win-win solution." <-- That is not the only reason they start, and presume understanding can be arrived at soon enough to avoid otherwise necessary military action.

"Military deterrence is ... to avoiding war." <-- Avoiding war is not the highest, greatest goal. Convince an opponent that it is your goal with too great an investment in jaw, jaw, and you guarantee war, war.


Making clear that certain red lines can not be crossed without kinetic consequences up to and including credibly the subjugation of the miscreant state is how war leading to that are avoided.

For example, Communist China must abandon the Nine Dash Line and the conquest of Taiwan. There is not a heck of a lot to talk about until and unless they do. Why yes, that is a declaration that only a limited government democratic in character is acceptable as a long term outcome on mainland China.

And frankly also the de facto annexation of territories/bodies off planet must not be undertaken by China.


0 0 Reply 



**TheRadicalModerate**   TomDPerkins #Omelas

9 months ago

You didn't see me arguing against deterrence. I'm arguing against *only* deterrence.

1 0 Reply 



**Tom Billings**   TheRadicalModerate

9 months ago

The lack of talking is from several problems, but is bi-fold.

- 1.) Both Space Force CSOs have openly complained that PLASSF *\*will\*not\** talk to them.
- 2.) There has been little pressure from the White House to back up their CSOs, whether from indifference, or from Hunter's positioning with Chinese hierarchs.
- 3.) The Chinese seem complacent on that, until the US lets technology flow as freely as in the 1990's. That won't happen anytime this decade. This is another play in long-term Chinese strategy at the national level, ... make the US come to them, at the highest levels, to get even the smallest cooperation. Those who know a bit of Chinese history will find the strategy familiar from the Imperial Dynasties of "The Central Kingdom".

1 1 Reply ↗



**화성의 태양** → Tom Billings

9 months ago

But the Chinese are the ones refusing military contact and the kind of "highest level" cooperation you're talking about, aren't they. As far as knowing a "bit" of Chinese history, that's part of the problem with you people; you dip your toes in the water on any given foreign or 'alien' subject and you think that qualifies you to make earth-shattering decisions and other blunders that nobody else wanted or gave you the permission to do. It's an unsustainable situation, actually. That means it will end soon.

0 0 Reply ↗



**Tom Billings** → 화성의 태양

9 months ago edited

"But the Chinese are the ones refusing military contact and the kind of "highest level" cooperaytion you're talking about, aren't they."

At least you got one thing right.

"As far as knowing a "bit" of Chinese history, that's part of the problem with you people; you dip your toes in the water on any given foreign or 'alien' subject and you think that qualifies you to make earth-shattering decisions and other blunders that nobody else wanted or gave you the permission to do."

Let's see, ..."You people" ... so, you see us as separate from you, ... and you see that as a "problem", ... it might be, just not in the way you think. The idea that a literate citizen of the Republic is unfit to comment on a subject without life-long study is an old one inside academia, ... and is deeply scorned outside the universities, for good reason, given academia's high agency costs in their influence over decisions, demonstrated over the last 50 years.

"... blunders that nobody else wanted or gave you the permission to do."

[see more](#)

0 1 Reply ↗



**TheRadicalModerate** → Tom Billings

9 months ago

That is, unfortunately, why a US contested space doctrine is necessary. But it shouldn't be forgotten that the US is way, way ahead of the Chinese, and there's a pretty good chance that Starship can put parity out of reach for another 15-20 years.

The Chinese have to be pooping their pants about P2P Starship. Not only does it fundamentally change rapid reaction logistics, it's also a perfectly good bombing platform: it shows up on a hypersonic trajectory, starts a bellyflop so high that it's expensive to reach with anti-air ordnance, deploys 200t of nasty stuff, and then boosts out of the theater, to land somewhere friendly. It completely invalidates China's area-denial strategy for the Taiwan situation.

This is how you get their people to come to the table. Meanwhile, even low-level talks get everybody acquainted with each other. Diplomacy is ultimately very personal. You have to know the people you're dealing with.

0 1 Reply ↗



**화성의 태양** → TheRadicalModerate

9 months ago

This is how countries are put on the short list for irreversible and rapid, across the board decline... through sheer arrogance and the pig-headed stupidity that

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