



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Dan Donovan (R-NY) Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications Subcommittee

Joint Hearing with the Armed Service Committee's Strategic Forces Subcommittee
"Threats to Space Assets and Implications for Homeland Security"

March 29, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

Good afternoon. First, I would like to thank Chairman Rogers for holding this hearing today and including my Subcommittee in this very important and timely discussion.

In today's world, our lives are connected more than ever before and this is because of our space-based capabilities, specifically satellites. Without satellites, we cannot:

- Make financial transactions
- Communicate with cellphones
- Navigate from one location to another
- Fly airplanes
- Watch television; and
- Effectively prepare for and respond to natural disasters and, god forbid, terrorist attacks.

Space-based capabilities, like Global Positioning Systems (GPS), satellites communications, and remote sensing, not only help our military operations but have made it safer for our first responders to effectively and efficiently respond to a crisis or emergency.

Nearly five years ago, my district, which includes Staten Island and parts of Brooklyn, was devastated by Superstorm Sandy. This "perfect storm" caused dozens of New Yorkers to lose their lives, thousands of homes to be damaged or destroyed, and for billions of dollars to be spent on reconstructing communities, including my own.

The preparedness and response efforts directed at Superstorm Sandy, while not perfect, were much better than previous major disasters, like Hurricane Katrina. Satellite capabilities were part of the reason first responders and government agencies had the information needed to respond decisively and quickly.

Satellites are being used to enhance our nation's preparedness and response efforts, especially when critical infrastructure is damaged, destroyed, or overloaded. I saw this firsthand during Superstorm Sandy.

Prior to Superstorm Sandy making landfall, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) used the storm track predications from weather satellites to preposition equipment and resources all along the east coast. Additionally, FEMA used satellite imagery to expedite the disaster declaration process and provide

assistance to impacted areas. During the response effort, teams deployed satellite communications equipment and high-throughput satellite terminals to provide voice and internet connectivity to first responders and survivors. These are a few of the growing reasons why satellite capabilities are key to our homeland security.

While we need to continue to look for ways to incorporate space-based capabilities into our preparedness and response efforts, we need to be cognizant of the threat to these space systems. There are numerous threats, whether intentional to naturally occurring, that could damage or destroy our satellites and significantly reduce the life-saving capabilities they provide to our first responders. I'm particularly interested in learning more about how our nation's preparedness and response efforts could be impacted if our space capabilities were diminished.

I want to thank our distinguished panel for testifying this afternoon and I look forward to learning more about what we, in Congress, can do to help ensure our military and first responders don't lose these vital capabilities.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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