

U.S. Army Space Command activated

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SMDC/ARSTRAT Historical Office

1985, in many respects, was a pivotal year for U.S. Army Space Command. In that year, Army leaders realized the potential of space.

In January, the Training and Doctrine Command formed a Space Directorate to develop concepts, doctrine and operational requirements to make the best use of space and to support operations.

Vice Chief of Staff of the Army General Maxwell Thurman directed, in May 1985, that an Army Space Initiatives Study be conducted to analyze the Army's role in space and its use of space. Their report, published at the end of the year, recommended the creation of an Army Space Command, as the Army element of the newly formed joint U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM). The first step had already been made. In September, the small Army liaison staff element at the U.S. Air Force Space Command (AFSPC) was renamed the Army Space Planning Group.

The first Army space organization at Colorado Springs was an Army Staff Field Element founded in 1984 as a liaison office to AFSPC. With the addition of a planning mission in 1985, it became the Army Space Planning Group. It was subsequently activated in 1987 as the Army Space Agency (ASA) as "the foundation of the Army's operational capability in space." The ASA was a field operating agency of the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans and the designated Army Component Command of USSPACECOM. On April 7, 1988, the ASA was reorganized and renamed the U.S. Army Space Command (ARSPACE). The new command retained its predecessor's planning and coordination functions and received added responsibility for the Consolidated Space Operations Center Detachment, the U.S. Army NASA-Johnson Space Center Detachment and three Regional Space Support Centers. ARSPACE assumed an operational role when the Army Signal Command's Defense Satellite Communication System (DSCS) platform and payload control mission was also assigned to the organization.

The original unit insignia of the U.S. Army Space Command, authorized in December 1988, symbolizes the Army's responsibilities for missile defense and strategic defense planning and the significance of satellites in navigation, communications and surveillance.



Directly tied to the Army Staff in the Pentagon, ARSPACE had several roles. It provided USSPACECOM an Army perspective in planning for Department of Defense space systems support to land forces and strategic defense operations to ensure integration of Army requirements.

Initially the command was given five missions. In addition to supporting USSPACECOM as its Army component, it would command the DSCS Operation Centers and manage joint tactical use, plan for the possible fielding and operation of "Strategic Defense System elements and anti-satellite weapons, should the United States choose to deploy them."

The command was also charged with assuring the Army's access and use of space-based capabilities to accomplish the goals of AirLand Battle Doctrine and preparing for personnel and facility growth.

The ARSPACE mission grew in the years leading to the Persian Gulf War. The Army found itself increasingly dependent upon space to conduct its operations. The typical Soldier relied on space-based systems to determine his position, locate the enemy, communicate with friendly forces and fire "smart weapons."

For the Army, space was becoming the new "high ground," an important part of firepower and information dominance on the battlefield. ARSPACE helped in developing or encouraging the use of all the products which provided these capabilities.

Most of these space products were and continue to be transparent to the Soldier on the ground, who often does not know what technologies or organization provides this key assistance.

Part of a New Major Command

On Aug. 24, 1992, the U.S. Army Strategic Defense Command was redesignated the U.S. Army Space and Strategic Defense Command (USASSDC). This General Order also established ARSPACE as a subordinate command of the USASSDC. Also as

"... Desert Storm provided a real test for the command ...

ARSPACE didn't fight the war in the traditional Army sense of fighting and we sure didn't win the war. However, we believe we exposed the Army to the potential of space applications early on, prior to the war, and that exposure assisted the fighters to do their jobs better and easier ..."

— Col. Michael Keaveney
ARSPACE Commander
April 1991

part of the reorganization the USASSDC was designated as the Army's focal point for space in an effort to centralize research and development of space and strategic assets for the benefit of the Soldier in the field. The ARSPACE Commander also became the USASSDC Deputy Commander for Operations.

In the 1990s, ARSPACE missions expanded. The management, planning, and control of DSCS satellite payloads, however, remained the largest mission.

ARSPACE operated and maintained five DSCS Control Facilities (DCFs) around the world. These facilities controlled the satellite links for tactical warfighter communications and strategic communications networks. They also provided payload control to the satellite and technical training and troubleshooting assistance required to ensure maximum support to the user.

Additionally, the DCFs provided platform control and monitored the health and welfare of the payloads for selected satellites in the DSCS constellation. (The Army's DSCS effort was eventually organized as the 1st Satellite Control Battalion and later renamed the 53rd Signal Battalion.) New elements of the ARSPACE mission were the creation of the Army Space Support Teams (ARSSTs) and Commercial Exploitation Teams (CETs).

ARSSTs provide communications, weather, terrain analysis and 3-D visualization, mapping, and satellite coverage analysis capabilities to the commanders on the ground.

The CETs provide similar services by arranging for the use of commercial satellite assets. They are deployed to exercises, contingency operations and combat operations and have provided continual support to our warfighters since Operation Desert Storm.

Rotating ARSSTs and CETs have deployed and remained on station to support operations in Afghanistan and Iraq since December 2002.

A New Name for a New Era

As the new brigades were being stood up, changes were also being made at USSTRATCOM which had an impact on ARSPACE.

Early in 2003 President George W. Bush had signed Change 2 of the 2002 Unified Command Plan. The plan resulted in the merger of U.S. Space Command and U.S. Strategic Command.

Subsequently, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command became the Army Service Component Command to USSTRATCOM and ARSPACE was re-designated as Army Forces Strategic Command (ARSTRAT).

Since that time the entire command has shared the title USASMDC/ARSTRAT. Although the name has changed, the command continues to fulfill the full-spectrum space and missile defense missions for which it was established.



Courtesy photo
24th Infantry Division Soldiers use a global positioning system during operations. GPS is one of the many space products provided to the warfighter.