

Transcript: Gen. Whiting keynote at Space Symposium 41, April 14, 2026 (As Delivered)

Good morning and thank you for that kind introduction. It truly is a pleasure to be here at the 41st Space Symposium at The Broadmoor, and I appreciate the invite from the Space Foundation. It's hard not to be inspired in a place like this—surrounded by the beauty of Pikes Peak, Colorado's endless skies, and a venue that has welcomed and inspired visitors for over a century.

As we gather here we're also celebrating America's 250th anniversary, and we are reminded that the same courage and determination that built this country, continues to guide our work at U.S. Space Command. The United States stands as the land of the free and the home of the brave, and freedom and courage remain the pillars of our national identity, and they are the foundation of our success in the space domain as well.

That success rests in the people of this joint Command. Every professional in this formation—be they a Sailor, a Soldier, an Airman, a Marine, a Guardian, a Coast Guardsmen, or civilian—is guided by a distinct set of service values. Now, across the Joint force, we talk a lot about things like courage, sacrifice, professionalism, even a sense of sportsmanship and fair play. But let's be honest, when it comes to fighting and winning our nation's wars, we are not here to take turns... we are here to dominate. So, let's take a look at this clip... **[video clip 'polite soldiers']**

Now, that kind of courtesy doesn't exist in modern warfare. But there is a lesson in that. The way we fight must evolve with the realities of the world that we now live in. America understood this early on - our Continental Army and militias didn't simply replicate 18th century European linear warfare; they adapted, blending it with more agile, unconventional tactics that ultimately gave the victory.

From the very beginning, we have never fought alone. We fight as a team. We fight as a combined and joint force. And when we do, we win. In 1781, that joint and allied advantage proved decisive at the siege of Yorktown. American forces, alongside our French allies, synchronized land and naval power to trap and defeat a larger British army—securing our nation's independence.

But that victory wasn't just about courage on the battlefield, it was also about unity of effort, trust between partners, and the integration of capabilities—principles that remain at the core of how we operate at U.S. Space Command.

In 1781, American and French forces began a 600-mile march across nine states—the largest operational movement of the Revolutionary War. The Yorktown Campaign achieved victory through the synchronization of maneuver, deception, and coalition warfare across multiple domains. U.S. Space Command is operationalizing these same principles in the space domain today. Our strategic advantage comes from our ability to integrate our people, partners, and technology to disrupt and defeat our opponents.

Under George Washington and alongside French Gen. Rochambeau, our Continental Army moved with unity of purpose.

At Yorktown, General Washington executed a demonstration in operational deception. He fixed British attention on New York, reinforcing British General Clinton's belief that the decisive blow would fall there. All signals pointed north—while the main effort shifted south. In coordination with Gen. Rochambeau and Admiral de Grasse, Washington rapidly maneuvered across Virginia, where French sea power cut off the British and allowed the United States to seal off Yorktown after the Battle of the Chesapeake.

The British were fixed in the wrong place, and General Washington quickly dislocated the opponent. Yorktown proved that synchronized combat power across domains produces decisive outcomes.

As current operations have shown, space power now shapes all joint operations —global precision strike, missile warning, navigation, maneuver warfare, communications, and command and control all depend upon access to space.

China and Russia are fielding advanced counter-space capabilities designed to hold U.S. and allied space systems at risk. Our competitors are fielding reversible jammers, offensive cyber weapons, directed energy capabilities, on-orbit inspection systems, and anti-satellite weapons capable of reaching every orbital regime. China is advancing capabilities not only in Earth but with a clear ambition in the cislunar domain as well — pursuing infrastructure and presence that signal the strategic importance they place on that high frontier. In addition, the Chinese have demonstrated proximity operations and debris “mitigation” capabilities through spacecraft such as the SJ-21 and the SJ-25 that showcase refueling and servicing operations.

These technologies may be presented as peaceful. And perhaps some of them are, for now, but capability, not intent, shapes deterrence. A logistics architecture that can refuel satellites, can just as easily be a maneuver advantage and extend the operational life for systems designed to hold ours at risk.

In 1781, control of the Chesapeake shaped the outcome at Yorktown. Today, Space shapes the outcome of every global operation.

History reminds us what's possible. And, just as 250 years ago, it's people who make it all happen. So, I'd like to this morning, introduce you to some of our great people at U.S. Space Command. I want to highlight the operational impact that they make each and every day—and how their expertise, commitment, and teamwork directly drive the success of our mission—just as the Revolutionary era Americans did.

At Yorktown, victory came from the integration of land and sea power at the decisive moment. Today, our partnerships with commercial space companies deliver the same advantage by multiplying capacity and accelerating tempo.

U.S. Space Command is spearheading a “Campaigning with Commercial Partners” initiative, using collaboration agreements to experiment with willing, innovative companies that are either on orbit now or soon will be. These partnerships are not symbolic. They are capability driven.

They accelerate innovation, expand warfighting capacity, and increase operational tempo that government alone cannot achieve.

In a contested environment, industrial strength increases capacity and capability, and that integration is pivotal in ensuring commercial systems are ready to augment and enhance warfighting operations.

To strengthen our partnership with commercial companies, U.S. Space Command has now created a quarterly tabletop exercise series called Apollo Insight. We just concluded our first TTX last month, and it was an event focused on weapons of mass destruction on orbit. Now, of course, that's a development we do not want to see come to fruition, but reporting indicates that Russia plans to launch such a weapon, and that has forced us to prepare. Our next event will be focused on Maneuver Warfare, followed by a Proliferated Orbits exercise and closing out the year with a Missile Defense exercise focused on the Arctic region.

Behind the scenes of this massive partnering effort is CDR Heather Thomas— leading this effort with vision and innovation. Heather – Please stand up!

CDR Thomas serves as the Commercial Integration Lead here at U.S. Space Command, a position she assumed just over 10 months ago. Thank you, Heather. In a remarkably short time, she has generated unmatched momentum for this command, and we are stronger and better postured because of her leadership and the partnerships she has formed. So, thank you Heather, I appreciate you being here with us this morning.

The necessity of maneuver in space has intensified over the past year as we've watched China demonstrate their orbital refueling and logistics prowess.

Movement and Maneuver is a joint function, and Maneuver is a principle of war, so all of our distilled wisdom and experience across all domains says that we need to apply it to space just as we do to all the other domains.

To be successful in today's environment, we need a different strategy to deter and win a global protracted conflict against a great power. That strategy is maneuver-warfare: which seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through the rapid, focused, and unexpected actions, spatially, temporally, and psychologically.

When we look at scenarios involving a protracted conflict against a peer opponent, we need a new strategy that isn't predictable or static. U.S. Space Command must collaborate across the enterprise toward a maneuver warfare strategy. Secretary Hegseth has emphasized that space is quote the "decisive battlefield of this century – whoever controls space, controls the future fight." Unquote.

In space, we must perform, survive, and gain positional advantage. We want innovation that gives us maneuverability, endurance, and survivability – because maneuver warfare demands rapid, focused, and unexpected actions that shatter the enemy's cohesion. A satellite which is

locked in a predictable orbit is fighting from a fixed position, and it's a target. It's a known position on a map, waiting to be bypassed or neutralized.

A force that can maneuver, however, and not be limited by the fuel it was launched with, and reposition as operationally needed, is the one that holds the initiative. Gen. George Washington executed maneuver warfare through strategic deception. A 600-mile march that caught the British off-guard in New York. This surprise created operational shock and strategic opportunity. Applying this same initiative in space creates the same decisive leverage today.

So, to test these initiatives, we have challenged our team at U.S. Space Command to build off a concept that I mentioned earlier this year when I spoke about space logistics. That concept is the Apollo Maneuvers, building on the U.S. Army's Louisiana Maneuvers of 1941. U.S. Space Command has a team of analysts which operate our Capabilities, Analysis and Verification Environment (or, the CAVE lab, as we call it). These analysts use modeling and simulations to visualize this concept and then they will hand over their findings to our Wargames branch for future testing and analysis.

Now, The leads for these efforts are Dr. Nick Martin and Lt Col Marshall Tillis. Nick and Marshall, please stand up!

Nick has been with U.S. Space Command for almost a year and a half, and he leads the CAVE's Advanced Analytics Branch for modeling and simulation. And Marshall has led the Wargaming branch for the past 9 months, leading his team of planners to work with our service components and our international partners to explore future challenges and identify solutions to tomorrow's biggest problems.

I have challenged Nick and Marshall to look at this tough problem of how we must transform to a maneuver warfare strategy for space and provide us with the analytic underpinnings and foundations and wargaming insights to show the value of maneuvering forces in space. So, please join me in giving Dr. Nick Martin and Lt Col. Marshall Tillis a round of applause!

As I mentioned earlier, Yorktown proved the power of coalition warfare in 1781 which remains central to our success today. For the United States and our closest Allies in space, Multinational Force Operation Olympic Defender is foundational to integrating military spacepower. Just last month, Operation Selene - a Canadian-led effort under MNF-OOD, brought together seven nations in our most focused, Combined space domain awareness operation to date. This operation tested military and commercial space capabilities in a unified, command and control network to enhance real-time awareness and threat detection.

Participating nations synchronized multi-domain effects across eight C2 centers, across all of our nations. Operation Selene pushed the limits of space surveillance systems while improving our ability to identify, attribute, and respond to our opponents' behaviors on orbit. In fact, Operation Selene was so successful that I'm proud to announce we are now making it an enduring operation for MNF-OOD, further strengthening collective deterrence and defense in the space AOR.

Now, that kind of success doesn't just happen; Lt. Col. Joey Baker of the Royal Canadian Air Force, was the person bringing it all together here at Headquarters U.S. Space Command in conjunction with our teammates at the 3rd Space Division in Canada under the inspired leadership of Brigadier General Chris Horner. Now, we're proud to have Lt. Col Baker on our team, and to get to work with him and Brigadier General Horner each and every day, because 250 years ago...those two officers might have been on the other side of that story there in Yorktown.

Good thing that history worked out the way it did, and today we stand shoulder to shoulder as allies...so, Joe, if you wouldn't mind standing up for us.

Today, at U.S. Space Command, Lt. Col. Baker serves as an MNF-OOD Strategy Exchange Officer – a role he has held for the past 9 months. He has been the driving force behind making this operation a reality with our teammates in Canada. So, Joey, thank you. Your efforts strengthen our ability to deter, detect, and, if necessary, respond to adversary actions in orbit. Your impact moves MNF-OOD forward. Thanks for being with us this morning.

Now, as forces converged on Yorktown, success depended on preparation, trust, the strength of allied support, and precise timing to secure key terrain.

That same synchronization carried American and Canadian Artemis II astronauts around the Moon and back for the first time in over 50 years just last week.

Just as Yorktown secured decisive ground, Artemis is securing the next generation of key terrain—advancing our presence in cislunar space and shaping the future of exploration. At U.S. Space Command, we're proud to be a small part supporting NASA's Artemis II mission through our Human Space Flight Support program, led by 1st Air Force's Detachment 3.

Our Artemis astronauts represent the United States' and the free world's spirit of innovation and bravery—but they don't do it alone. Behind them stands a formation of engineers, parachute riggers, medics, and rescue professionals ensuring every phase of the mission succeeds.

One of those professionals is Master Sgt. Oviel Mariscal Acosta - we call him OV - at Detachment 3, Patrick Space Force Base, Florida. He's the NCOIC of Medical Logistics, OV ensures life-saving capabilities are ready when it matters most. So, OV, if you could stand up for us please.

OV leads the deployment and sustainment of critical medical assets supporting NASA's Artemis and Commercial Crew programs. In a standout achievement just recently, he compressed a week-long process into just 24 hours—delivering life-saving equipment to support SpaceX Crew 11's early return from the ISS. His performance sets the standard for medical logistics.

His impact was on full display during Artemis II, and operations like that demand flawless medical readiness—something OV ensures through preparation and contingency planning. His work keeps us ready to protect and recover astronauts as we push further into space. So, please join me in a round of applause for Master Sgt. Acosta!

Now, Just as the Continental Army's headquarters moved locations multiple times during the Revolutionary War, U.S. Space Command is on the move as well. Colorado Springs has been an extraordinary home since our reestablishment in 2019. This city has welcomed us with open arms. And the partnerships we've built here have been remarkable – from the neighborhoods our staff lives in, to the schools, businesses, and houses of worship we frequent, to the mayor's office and our congressional leaders. Across the Pikes Peak Region, Colorado Springs has not just been a host city; it is family. Your support, hospitality and pride in our mission have strengthened us in ways we cannot overstate. And for that, we are deeply grateful.

But as we look to the future, U.S. Space Command is entering a new chapter with our headquarters relocating to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. And leading the way for us is Task Force Voyager, ensuring a seamless, mission-focused transition grounded in the values we built here in Colorado Springs. At Redstone, we're establishing a purpose-built, integrated warfighting headquarters—something U.S. Space Command has never had, going all the way back to when we were first founded in 1985 at what was then called Peterson Air Force Base. Using a first-of-its-kind, progressive, design-build approach, we are bringing together the right team and a broad team to get it right from the start.

Now, to maintain mission continuity, we've strengthened retention and relocation bonuses, reinforcing the critical role of our civilian workforce and their expertise.

And just as we found here in Colorado Springs, the welcome we have received in Huntsville, and across the Tennessee Valley Region, has been exceptional—and for that we are very appreciative.

Even as we transition to Redstone, our people remain focused—maintaining continuity and momentum. Transformation and operations have to occur together because our professionals are committed to ensuring there will Never Be a Day Without Space. So, I'd like to highlight Ms. Lynne Wanderscheid. Early on, Lynne recognized the need for collaboration—she identified a critical gap: a direct link to the team at Redstone. So, Lynne, please stand up.

Lynne, thank you. You didn't just identify the problem—you became the solution by embedding yourself at Redstone. Lynne became the conduit for information, connecting our Colorado Springs team with the plans for the new headquarters at Redstone. And today, Lynne leads the planning, design, and construction of the Command and Control Facility—the future platform for our critical mission execution. As the first U.S. Space Command representative on site at Redstone after the President's September 2025 decision, Lynne established the transition team, she built the key mission partner relationships, and she set the conditions for a successful operational stand-up. So, please join me in a round of applause for Ms. Lynne Wanderscheid!

But make no mistake, even as we move our headquarters to Huntsville, we must succeed at our daily mission. Space enables every combatant command and underwrites joint operations worldwide. Through Operation EPIC FURY, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Caine, highlighted U.S. Space Command as a first mover—layering non-kinetic effects to disrupt and degrade Iran's ability to see, communicate, and respond at the very start of major combat operations.

These actions underscore why achieving and maintaining space superiority is so critical—not just to safeguard precision strike capability, missile warning and tracking, and secure communications, but to provide overwatch for our joint forces in harm’s way. U.S. Space Command executes offensive and defensive operations to set favorable conditions for joint warfighters when it matters most.

But space superiority is not just about satellites and sensors—it’s about the warriors who operate those systems, just as our national defense has always been about the warriors, from 1776 up until today.

It is in that spirit that we honor Staff Sgt. Benjamin Pennington, of the U.S. Army’s Space and Missile Defense Command’s 1st Space Brigade, right here at Fort Carson, who paid the ultimate sacrifice in Operation EPIC FURY.

He is not here today to stand among us, and yet his courage and dedication is impossible to overlook. Staff Sgt. Pennington’s sacrifice reminds us that every capability we hold in space is operated by heroes willing to give everything. To Staff Sgt. Pennington’s parents, who are watching this event today: Tim & Carrie, thank you for raising a true hero, one who has joined the ranks of those patriotic Americans who have secured and defended our nation’s freedom for 250 years. Thank you for sharing him with us. Your son’s courage and sacrifice will never be forgotten.

As we honor Staff Sgt. Pennington, we are reminded that our mission is part of something larger—a march toward victory that spans centuries. In 1781, a reorganized, coalition-backed force marched with purpose, and Yorktown became the campaign from which independence emerged. Today, we are now on our own March to Victory.

Space superiority is the foundation of our national security and global stability. And just like the soldiers at Yorktown, our success relies on disciplined professionals, integrated allies, commercial innovation, and maneuver dominance. The same virtues that carried the Continental Army to triumph, those endure within this formation today.

At 250 years, America advances with confidence and U.S. Space Command secures the final frontier for the next generation. We honor those who came before us, we stand on the shoulders of heroes like Staff Sgt. Pennington, and we continue forward—ever vigilant, ever ready, and ever committed to peace through strength.

So, thank you again to the Space Foundation for the opportunity to speak today, and I look forward to engaging with many of you this week here at Space Symposium. Thank you.