

## Time for US Values for the Heavens

by Jonathan Granoff

Shopping alone in the red light district is not only embarrassing but when it comes to international security issues, it is downright dangerous. The US properly condemned North Korea for testing nuclear weapons. But, when a vote calling for a universal legally verifiable prohibition against nuclear weapons tests was proposed at the last General Assembly of the UN, North Korea and the US alone pushed the red light and voted "No."

Similarly, our condemnation of the recent anti-satellite weapon test by China is well founded. But, when the issue of voting on preventing an arms race in space arose in the last General Assembly of the UN, the US alone pushed the red light.

The US Delegate to the General Assembly explained our vote: "There is no arms race in space, and no prospect of an arms race in space. Thus, there is no arms problem for the international community to address." This assertion at the time, October 6, 2006, although silly, might have been technically correct. The US was the only country overtly pursuing weaponization. The President triumphantly asserted as much in our National Space Policy, released a few weeks later. This new policy opposes "the development of new legal regimes or other restrictions that seek to prohibit or limit U.S. access or use of space." Since the US Space Command's notorious Vision 2020, which calls for "full spectrum dominance" to ensure "global precision strike" capability by unlimited US unilateral weaponization of space, the Administration's new policy of opposing legal restrictions is tantamount to asserting US unilateral claims to place kinetic kill weapons in space, advance anti-satellite weaponry, and develop and deploy laser weapons while condemning others from doing the same.

Is this consistent with US values of promoting international security through the rule of law? What on earth do our diplomats think when they rely on intelligence that ignores the reality that others will copy our conduct and informs our spokespeople that "there is no prospect of an arms race in space?"

China's test on January 11, 2007 involved tracking a satellite target precisely, lofting its high impact kill vehicle at extremely high speeds such that it made impact at exactly the location intended. This is an advanced technical achievement which also Russia and the US have done. Such activities could destroy much of our military and intelligence capacities and render modern life, which depends on satellites for communications, entirely compromised. We must learn a few lessons quickly.

With low cost an adversary can do enormous damage to US and Russian early warning systems that monitor nuclear weapons activities. By blinding our satellites, the very eyes that monitor the nuclear weapons activities of others, the hair trigger launch on warning systems with currently thousands of warheads pointed at us become even more hazardous. If China builds anti-satellite devices, so will we, Russia and India. Net result: greater risk of nuclear launches.

While countries will advocate arms control measures, they will not do so forever if they do not see US leadership responding. China has supported a space weapons ban for decades and remains willing to do so now, despite this unnecessary and dangerous act.

Theresa Hitchens, Director of the Center for Defense Information, stated:

*We are a step closer to the brink of losing space and reaching a point at which debris begins to self-proliferate in a chain reaction that results in levels of pollution so high as to prevent any spacecraft, at all, from being useful. That tipping point could be only one more similar test away. The fact that the Chinese test may actually have been legal should make clear to all the need to outlaw such behavior.*

It is high time that the US returns to its own values. We are the first country founded on confidence in the power of law. We rejected the law of power asserted by the British overreaching empire. Let's not let this Administration's quest for "full spectrum dominance," a radical assertion of empire, blind us to our own values and self interest. It is time to negotiate prohibitions against an arms race in space.

Jonathan Granoff is President of the Global Security Institute (GSI) and Senior Advisor of the American Bar Association's Committee on Arms Control and National Security. Further information about GSI is available at <http://www.gsinstitute.org>