The Department of Transportation and Federal Aviation Administration

Siting New Spaceports and Use of Priority Airspace for Critical Space Launch Corridors

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INTRODUCTION

The United States needs more dependable ways to reach space. Satellites support critical military communications, intelligence, and navigation and provide missile-launch warnings, while businesses use them to provide broadband connectivity, imagery, and positioning, navigation, and timing services.[1]

Air Force Secretary Troy Meink told Congress in May that launch bases and infrastructure are beginning to limit the country's ability to expand commercial and national security missions.[2] The commercial stakes are substantial: more than 500 spacecraft builders and satellite operators, representing roughly $50 billion in capital investment since 2000, generate demand for U.S. launches.[3] When launch capacity is unavailable, the military may struggle to replace lost capabilities or create new ones, and companies may have to postpone new services and delay revenue. Launch infrastructure is therefore essential to U.S. national security and foundational to economic growth.

Space has also become a central arena of great-power competition. China is rapidly advancing its space capabilities, increasing launch activity and expanding satellite networks for military and commercial use. Chinese firms are also competing with American companies for launch and satellite customers worldwide.[4] China and Russia are developing counterspace weapons designed to disrupt, disable, or destroy U.S. space systems.[5] Maintaining America's advantage requires reliable launch infrastructure and available rockets to deploy satellites.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) are wisely seeking public and industry input on where to expand spaceport capacity and how to give critical launches priority access to airspace. The agencies should use the results from this request for information (RFI) to identify how public and private investment can expand usable launch capacity at existing and new U.S. spaceports while assessing opportunities to use suitable sites in allied countries.

The National Space Transportation Policy, released in August 2026, calls for launch ranges able to support more than 1,000 launches and reentries annually by 2030 and an assessment of

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[1] Johanna Yang, "America runs on GPS. It needs a backup plan," *Threat Beat*, September 29, 2026. (https://www.fdd.org/analysis/america-runs-on-gps-it-needs-a-backup-plan)
[2] Theresa Hitchens, "DAF study finds new space launch site 'probably' required," *Breaking Defense*, May 20, 2026. (https://breakingdefense.com/2026/05/daf-study-finds-new-space-launch-site-probably-required)
[3] Joey Roulette, "SpaceX's satellite ambitions squeeze out rivals reliant on its rockets," *Reuters*, August 4, 2026. (https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/spacexs-satellite-ambitions-squeeze-out-rivals-reliant-its-rockets-2026-08-04)
[4] U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, "The Final Frontier: China's Ambitions to Dominate Space," *2025 Annual Report to Congress*, November 2025, pages 370-372. (https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2025-11/Chapter_7--The_Final_Frontier_Chinas_Ambitions_to_Dominate_Space.pdf)
[5] Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community," March 2026, pages 14-16. (https://archive.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2026-Unclassified-Report.pdf); Jack Burnham, "Showcasing Advanced Space Capabilities, China Displays 'Dogfighting' Maneuvers in Low Earth Orbit," Foundation for Defense of Democracies, March 21, 2025. (https://www.fdd.org/analysis/policy-briefs/showcasing-advanced-space-capabilities-china-displays-dogfighting-maneuvers-in-low-earth-orbit)

barriers to serving urgent launch needs within 48 hours.[6] The FAA's RFI reports 217 launches in 2025, but that figure counts only launches, while the policy's goal of 1,000 includes launches and reentries. Reaching those goals requires high-capacity launch facilities, available rockets, and robust security safeguards.

LAUNCH CONCENTRATION AND ROCKET SHORTAGES AFFECT NATIONAL SECURITY AND BUSINESS

The FAA's RFI states that the Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, and Vandenberg Space Force Base in California account for 83 percent of U.S. launches, concentrating launch activity at just three locations. Moreover, the two Florida installations are near each other, meaning that more than half of U.S. launches are geographically concentrated; a hurricane or other regional disruption could temporarily close both sites at once, sharply limiting U.S. launch options. NASA's inspector general warned in June that rising launch demand could bring Kennedy and Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia near operational capacity in 2028-2029.[7] At Kennedy, demands on shared launch-support systems could leave less flexibility for additional missions or recovery from disruptions. At Wallops, the report counted 17 NASA-supported launches in 2025 and projected 44 annually by 2030, raising concerns about whether planned upgrades can support that launch growth.

Government agencies recognize these pressures. Just as terrestrial military mobility depends on ports, runways, and rail networks, military space systems depend on secure launch infrastructure.[8] On October 20, Space Systems Command outlined its needs and priorities for U.S. spaceport infrastructure.[9] It emphasized modernizing the launch ranges in Florida and California to support more frequent military, civilian, and commercial launches and tests. Its commander also said the Space Force is examining an additional spaceport for medium- and heavy-lift rockets, with 2030 as an aspirational target.[10] The added spaceport would supplement the Space Force's two principal launch ranges: the Eastern Range, supporting launches from Kennedy and Cape Canaveral installations and the Western Range supporting launches from Vandenberg. NASA is also planning developments at Kennedy and seeking input on additional launch and satellite-processing capacity at Wallops to support growing government and

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[6] The White House, "The National Space Transportation Policy," August 20, 2026. (https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/08/national-security-presidential-memorandum-nspm-17)
[7] National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Office of Inspector General, "NASA's Launch Infrastructure," Report No. IG-26-010, June 22, 2026. (https://oig.nasa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/final-report-ig-26-010-nasas-launch-infrastructure.pdf)
[8] Annie Fixler, RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery, and Rory Lane, "Military Mobility Depends on Secure Critical Infrastructure," Cyberspace Solarium Commission 2.0, March 27, 2025, pages 4-5. (https://cybersolarium.org/csc-2-0-reports/military-mobility-depends-on-secure-critical-infrastructure)
[9] U.S. Space Force, Space Systems Command, "Space Access Portfolio Vision and Requirements," released October 20, 2026. (https://www.ssc.spaceforce.mil/Portals/3/Documents/Space%20Access%20Portfolio%20Vision%20Requirements.pdf)
[10] Courtney Albon, "Space Force Needs Third Launch Range by 2030, Acquisition Leader Says," *Air & Space Forces Magazine*, October 21, 2026. (https://www.airandspaceforces.com/space-force-third-launch-range-by-2030-garrant)

commercial missions.[11] DOT should coordinate with these agencies, build on their findings, and assess alternative sites and projects that address remaining gaps. Expanding spaceports must also be accompanied by access to compatible rockets and launch services.

The problem, however, extends beyond the obvious pads and rockets. At Kennedy, shared electrical power, gas supply and distribution, and transportation infrastructure are in poor condition and insufficient for growing demand.[12] Investing in launch infrastructure therefore demands more than the pads themselves. Relevant federal agencies and regulators also need to bolster and expand the critical infrastructure systems that support operators' ability to prepare and conduct missions.

THE UNIQUE ROLE OF SPACEX AND ITS IMPACTS ON U.S. GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY OPERATIONS

Space launch customers can purchase an entire flight or share one with other satellite operators through a rocket rideshare service. SpaceX conducted roughly 85 percent of orbital launches by U.S. providers in 2025.[13] That success reflects remarkable American innovation and entrepreneurship but also leaves many customers, including the U.S. government, largely dependent on one company's fleet and schedule.[14]

Amazon Leo, with a broadband constellation intended to compete with SpaceX's Starlink, secured 10 additional SpaceX Falcon 9 launches in late 2025 to accelerate satellite deployment, illustrating SpaceX's importance even to a Starlink competitor.[15] In March 2026, Amazon said it had adjusted weekly satellite production targets to account for limited rocket readiness and launch availability, with hundreds of flight-ready satellites waiting to launch.[16]

Limited launch availability has led customers to reserve flights years in advance and seek additional providers. SEOPS, which arranges launches for satellite customers, booked five Isar

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[11] National Aeronautics and Space Administration, "KSC Master Plan," last updated August 3, 2026. (https://www.nasa.gov/kennedy/masterplan); National Aeronautics and Space Administration, "Development of Additional Payload Processing Capability on North Wallops Island at Wallops Flight Facility," *SAM.gov*, updated August 31, 2026. (https://sam.gov/workspace/contract/opp/058be0d9d870443d8a52efbf40c5b794/view); National Aeronautics and Space Administration, "Development of Additional Launch Capacity on South Wallops Island at Wallops Flight Facility," *SAM.gov*, updated August 31, 2026. (https://sam.gov/workspace/contract/opp/758efb4b42a44d66bbbc1c9ae3a5367d/view)

[12] National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Office of Inspector General, "NASA's Launch Infrastructure," Report No. IG-26-010, June 22, 2026. (https://oig.nasa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/final-report-ig-26-010-nasas-launch-infrastructure.pdf)

[13] BryceTech, "Global Orbital Space Launches: 2025 Year in Review," April 8, 2026. (https://brycetech.com/reports/report-documents/global-orbital-activity-2025/BryceTech_Orbital_Launches_2025.pdf)

[14] Michael O'Connor and Kathleen Curlee, "Shaping the U.S. Space Launch Market: Extending America's Advantage," Center for Security and Emerging Technology, February 2025, pages 1 and 26. (https://cset.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/CSET-Shaping-the-U.S.-Space-Launch-Market.pdf)

[15] Amazon Staff, "Amazon Leo set to accelerate satellite production and launch cadence," *About Amazon*, March 23, 2026. (https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/amazon-leo/amazon-leo-plans-double-launch-rate-20-missions)

[16] Amazon Staff, "Amazon Leo set to accelerate satellite production and launch cadence," *About Amazon*, March 23, 2026. (https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/amazon-leo/amazon-leo-plans-double-launch-rate-20-missions)

Aerospace Spectrum missions in September for flights in 2028-2030.[17] Reuters reported in August that several companies had been told Falcon 9 was booked through 2028-2029.[18] *Politico* reported in October that the Space Force requested launch services for three military satellite missions but that no providers, including SpaceX, offered to launch them.[19] A Space Force official described the difficulties as "temporary."[20] Yet "temporary" difficulties are concerning in a launch market dominated by SpaceX and its Falcon 9 rocket, where competitors have yet to offer comparable launch capacity.[21] Without a truly competitive launch market, the U.S. government and businesses that rely on their assets getting to orbit to sustain essential services, like intelligence collection or satellite-enabled internet, could find themselves increasingly constrained moving forward.

In the third quarter of 2026, SpaceX reported $5.2 billion in revenue from its own satellite connectivity, compared with $1.1 billion from launch services.[22] Maintaining and expanding that satellite business requires launch capacity, creating potential competition between SpaceX's own payloads and those of outside customers. SpaceX has also explicitly warned that it "may prioritize [its] own launch payloads over additional U.S. government contracts or third-party customers," citing government contract compliance costs and its plans for data centers in space.[23]

SpaceX's transition from Falcon 9 to Starship creates additional uncertainty about launch bottlenecks. Satellites, rockets, launch pads, and supporting infrastructure are not interchangeable. A rocket configured for one satellite design does not automatically accommodate others: size, attachment and deployment equipment, orbital destination, and mission requirements differ. The U.S. government and commercial operators rely heavily on Falcon 9.[24] However, *Politico* reported that Starship's design for deploying flat satellites that are

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[17] Isar Aerospace, Press Release, "Isar Aerospace signs Multiple Launch Service Agreement with US-based SEOPS for Five Additional Launches," September 15, 2026. (https://isaraerospace.com/press/isar-aerospace-signs-multiple-launch-service-agreement-with-us-based-seops-for-five-additional-launches)

[18] Joey Roulette, "SpaceX's satellite ambitions squeeze out rivals reliant on its rockets," *Reuters*, August 4, 2026. (https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/spacexs-satellite-ambitions-squeeze-out-rivals-reliant-its-rockets-2026-08-04)

[19] Audrey Decker, "Space Force scrambles as Musk's SpaceX retires its major rocket," *Politico*, October 22, 2026. (https://www.politico.com/news/2026/10/22/space-force-spacex-rocket-musk-01131131)

[20] Ibid.

[21] Michael O'Connor and Kathleen Curlee, "Shaping the U.S. Space Launch Market: Extending America's Advantage," Center for Security and Emerging Technology, February 2025, pages 1 and 26. (https://cset.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/CSET-Shaping-the-U.S.-Space-Launch-Market.pdf); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Managing vulnerabilities, dependencies and sustainability risks of the space economy," *The Space Economy at a Glance 2026*, September 9, 2026, section "Market concentration can create strategic dependencies." (https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/the-space-economy-at-a-glance-2026_cbf9b240-en/full-report/managing-vulnerabilities-dependencies-and-sustainability-risks-of-the-space-economy_4d97ef6d.html)

[22] Space Exploration Technologies Corp., "SpaceX Reports Third Quarter 2026 Results," October 20, 2026, pages 3-4. (https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1181412/000162828026066482/spaceexplorationtechnologi.htm)

[23] Space Exploration Technologies Corp., "Prospectus for the public offering to retail investors," June 5, 2026, page 3. (https://content.spacex.com/cms-assets/FINAL_Documents%20and%20Updates/SpaceX%20-%20EU%20Prospectus%20%28Approved%20by%20Bafin%29%20-%20June%205%2C%202026.pdf)

[24] U.S. Space Force, Space Systems Command, "Space Force Awards Task Orders to Launch Space Based Sensing and Targeting Capabilities," July 29, 2026. (https://www.ssc.spaceforce.mil/Newsroom/Article-Display/Article/4559276/space-force-awards-task-orders-to-launch-space-based-sensing-and-targeting-capa); Joey Roulette, "SpaceX's satellite ambitions squeeze out rivals reliant on its rockets," *Reuters*, August 4, 2026.

closely packed together (such as Starlink's) presents engineering challenges for engineers of military satellites, which often have different shapes and configurations.[25] The Space Force remains open to using Starship for future missions, but compatibility and access to launches on required scheduling timelines remain concerns.[26]

SpaceX's planned Starship campus in Louisiana, with construction expected in 2027 and a first launch targeted as soon as 2029, could substantially expand launch capacity.[27] However, government and commercial customers need to understand how much of that capacity could serve outside payloads, particularly as SpaceX expands its own satellite and orbital computing businesses.

The Vulcan from United Launch Alliance (ULA) and Blue Origin's New Glenn rockets offer alternatives to SpaceX, but neither has matched Falcon 9's launch cadence and depth of operational experience. Vulcan's February 2026 mission delivered its spacecraft despite a booster anomaly, and ULA said it would investigate and make necessary corrections before its next flight.[28] A May 28 ground-test accident damaged Blue Origin's only operational New Glenn launch pad.[29] Reuters reported in October that flights were expected to resume in early 2027.[30] Blue Origin is restoring that pad and building another at Cape Canaveral, but those projects do not represent usable launch capacity today.[31]

DEVELOP LAUNCH SITES THAT PROVIDE USABLE ALTERNATIVES

DOT should evaluate proposed new or expanded spaceports by the missions and rockets they could support and how soon they could become operational. The FAA's spaceport inventory lists 20 facilities, including sites for runway-based launches, vertical rocket launches, and spacecraft reentry; these facilities all serve different purposes and include private, as well as federal, ranges.[32] A spaceport license alone does not establish that a site can support medium- and heavy-

(https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/spacexs-satellite-ambitions-squeeze-out-rivals-reliant-its-rockets-2026-08-04)

[25] Audrey Decker, "Space Force scrambles as Musk's SpaceX retires its major rocket," *Politico Pro*, October 21, 2026. (https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2026/10/space-force-scrambles-as-musks-spacex-retires-its-major-rocket-01131131)

[26] Audrey Decker, "Space Force scrambles as Musk's SpaceX retires its major rocket," *Politico Pro*, October 21, 2026. (https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2026/10/space-force-scrambles-as-musks-spacex-retires-its-major-rocket-01131131)

[27] Louisiana Economic Development, "SpaceX in Louisiana," accessed October 24, 2026. (https://www.opportunitylouisiana.gov/spacex)

[28] United Launch Alliance, "ULA Vulcan Rocket Successfully Launches the Future of Defense," February 12, 2026. (https://www.ulalaunch.com/about/news-detail/2026/02/12/ula-vulcan-rocket-successfully-launches-the-future-of-defense)

[29] Dave Limp, "New Glenn Return to Flight," *Blue Origin*, June 30, 2026. (https://www.blueorigin.com/news/new-glenn-return-to-flight)

[30] Joey Roulette, "Blue Origin targets multiple New Glenn launches weekly by end of decade," *Reuters*, October 16, 2026. (https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/blue-origin-targets-multiple-new-glenn-launches-weekly-by-end-decade-2026-10-16)

[31] Ian Richardson, "Building the Infrastructure for More Frequent Launches in Florida," *Blue Origin*, October 16, 2026. (https://www.blueorigin.com/news/building-infrastructure-for-more-frequent-launches-in-florida)

[32] Federal Aviation Administration, "Spaceports by State," last updated September 22, 2026. (https://www.faa.gov/space/spaceports_by_state)

lift orbital rockets such as Falcon 9 and New Glenn. DOT should prioritize projects that add this capacity, complementing the capabilities now concentrated at Kennedy, Cape Canaveral, and Vandenberg. It should also assess smaller launch sites for dedicated flights carrying compatible lighter payloads, including urgent, rapid U.S. military operations to replace one or a few satellites.

ASSESS EXISTING AND PROPOSED DOMESTIC SPACEPORTS

DOT should compare potential expansion at existing sites, including Kodiak and Wallops, with the costs and capabilities of proposed new locations.

One existing site worth assessing for expansion is the Pacific Spaceport Complex-Alaska on Kodiak Island. It provides access to polar orbits, which pass near the poles and can support Arctic surveillance.[33] Alaska Aerospace, the state-owned company that owns and operates the Pacific Spaceport Complex, describes historical activity of one to three launches a year and identifies transport, workforce, and lodging needs for expanded operations in its 2025 annual report.[34] DOT, NASA, and the Space Force should work with Alaska Aerospace, local authorities, and affected communities to conduct a feasibility study. The study should identify which rockets the site can support today, what upgrades would be needed for larger orbital rockets, how much those improvements would cost, and how expansion would affect local communities. It should also assess how remoteness and harsh weather would affect construction and operations and whether projected launch demand and the additional capacity would justify expansion.

NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia, which hosts the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport, provides another established route to orbit. NASA is seeking input on additional launch and satellite-processing capacity there.[35] However, the FAA's RFI identifies physical constraints and the lack of heavy-launch capability as limitations.[36] DOT should assess which additional missions Wallops could support and whether expanding its facilities would meet those needs sooner or at lower cost than building a new spaceport.

For new sites, DOT should assess national security benefits, access to required orbits, safe flight paths, and whether ground conditions can support launch pads, fuel storage, and satellite-processing facilities. Assessments should also examine construction and upkeep costs and public

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[33] Alaska Aerospace Corporation, "Spaceports," accessed October 24, 2026. (https://akaerospace.com/spaceports)
[34] Alaska Aerospace Corporation, "2025 Annual Report," pages 12-15. (https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6915246485ebf135e877ca89/t/69813d007689d10bfa7707b9/1770077440072/AAC%2B2025%2BAnnual%2BReport%2B%28Digital%29.pdf); Alaska Aerospace Corporation, "About Us," accessed October 25, 2026. (https://akaerospace.com/about)
[35] National Aeronautics and Space Administration, "Development of Additional Payload Processing Capability on North Wallops Island at Wallops Flight Facility," *SAM.gov*, updated August 31, 2026. (https://sam.gov/workspace/contract/opp/058be0d9d870443d8a52efbf40c5b794/view); National Aeronautics and Space Administration, "Development of Additional Launch Capacity on South Wallops Island at Wallops Flight Facility," *SAM.gov*, updated August 31, 2026. (https://sam.gov/workspace/contract/opp/758efb4b42a44d66bbbc1c9ae3a5367d/view)
[36] Federal Aviation Administration, "Siting New Spaceports and Use of Priority Airspace for Critical Space Launch Corridors," *Federal Register*, August 25, 2026. (https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/08/25/2026-17290/siting-new-spaceports-and-use-of-priority-airspace-for-critical-space-launch-corridors)

support, as well as local critical infrastructure capacity (such as energy, communications, and transportation networks) and the physical security and cybersecurity requirements of that infrastructure. The RFI names Shiloh in Florida, Camden in Georgia, Puerto Rico, and offshore platforms as possible locations. Additional Florida capacity could increase launch frequency but would further concentrate the infrastructure geographically.[37] Camden illustrates the importance of community support: voters rejected the county's planned land purchase for the spaceport in 2022, and Georgia's Supreme Court upheld the referendum in 2023.[38] Remote, island, and offshore locations also require realistic transport, evacuation, and severe-weather plans.

RAPID AND SUSTAINED LAUNCH CONSIDERATIONS

A prolonged conflict could require repeated urgent launches, followed by further missions as losses and operational needs continue to grow. Even when rockets and satellites are ready, unavailable launch pads, satellite-processing facilities, or airspace could delay the response. Therefore, DOT and the FAA should work with the Space Force and U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM) to identify requirements for short-notice missions and sustained launch operations. Those requirements should guide site selection and facility design.

Commercial providers have demonstrated short-notice launch capability. In June 2026, Rocket Lab's VICTUS HAZE mission used its small Electron rocket to launch a prepared spacecraft from New Zealand just 16 hours and 42 minutes after the Space Force's notice to launch.[39] That achievement highlights the potential of commercial providers and allied launch locations.

DOT and the FAA should work with the Space Force and SPACECOM to assess how many urgent missions commercial providers and sites could support in succession alongside existing commitments. This should include whether facilities could prepare multiple rockets and satellites at once, ready launch pads for successive flights, and provide alternatives if a site or rocket fleet became unavailable.

As the FAA develops priority launch corridors, it should build on existing airspace coordination procedures to define which urgent missions qualify and how priority access would be coordinated safely. Priority should reflect documented mission urgency and the consequences of delay while maintaining aviation safety and limiting disruption to civilian flights. The FAA should also assess how cyberattacks or outages affecting air traffic control and communications could delay urgent launches and identify backup arrangements for safe coordination.[40] DOT should prioritize investment in new or expanded facilities designed for frequent launches and

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[37] Federal Aviation Administration, "Siting New Spaceports and Use of Priority Airspace for Critical Space Launch Corridors," 91 Federal Register 54909, August 25, 2026. (https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/08/25/2026-17290/siting-new-spaceports-and-use-of-priority-airspace-for-critical-space-launch-corridors)

[38] Supreme Court of Georgia, *Camden County v. Sweatt, et al.*, No. S22A0837, February 7, 2023. (https://law.justia.com/cases/georgia/supreme-court/2023/s22a0837.html)

[39] "Rocket Lab Shatters Responsive Space Record: Launches U.S. Space Force VICTUS HAZE Mission in 16 Hours 42 Minutes," *Rocket Lab*, June 22, 2026. (https://rocketlabcorp.com/updates/victus-haze)

[40] Jiwon Ma, "Turbulence Ahead: Navigating the Challenges of Aviation Cybersecurity," *Cyberspace Solarium Commission 2.0*, April 10, 2025, pages 7 and 9. (https://cybersolarium.org/csc-2-0-reports/turbulence-ahead-navigating-the-challenges-of-aviation-cybersecurity)

short-notice missions, with enough launch-pad and satellite-processing capacity to sustain operations during a prolonged crisis.

PHYSICAL AND CYBER SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

The National Space Transportation Policy already requires the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security, in coordination with NASA, DOT, and other relevant agencies, to report on actions to secure launch infrastructure on federal property.[41] DOT should draw on the resulting findings when evaluating new or expanded spaceports so that security needs and costs inform site selection and facility design.

DOT should also work with the Department of Energy (DOE), the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), other federal agencies that serve as sector risk management agencies (SRMAs) for relevant critical infrastructure sectors, and local infrastructure owners and operators to assess whether power, fuel, communications, and transportation services can reliably support proposed or expanded spaceports. Assessments should identify necessary capacity upgrades, physical and cyber protections, backup services, and how those improvements would be funded and maintained. Reports should also gauge local critical infrastructure providers' willingness and ability to support new projects.

DOT should continue promoting and supporting implementation of the FAA's existing spaceport security guidance, including access controls, personnel vetting, network segmentation, backup power for IT systems, alternative communications, and continuity planning.[42] DOT and the FAA, in coordination with DOE, CISA, and relevant SRMAs, should work with spaceport owners and operators to assess backup power and safe shutdown and recovery arrangements for operational technology, including systems controlling fuel handling, power, and launch safety. Funding and operating agreements should assign responsibility for maintaining and testing these protections.

DOT should build on this foundation by working with DOE, CISA, infrastructure SRMAs, and other relevant agencies to help site owners, operators, and engineers apply cyber-informed engineering (CIE) when designing or expanding spaceports.[43] CIE incorporates cybersecurity into the design of physical systems from the outset, using engineering safeguards to limit damage and disruption from cyberattacks. These built-in safeguards can include mechanical valves that release excess pressure, even if control software or networks are compromised.[44] Meeting these capacity and security needs will require coordinated public and private investment.

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[41] The White House, "The National Space Transportation Policy," August 20, 2026, Section 2(h). (https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/08/national-security-presidential-memorandum-nspm-17)
[42] Federal Aviation Administration, "Best Practices for Spaceport Security," July 2024, pages 4-10. (https://www.faa.gov/media/83616)
[43] U.S. Department of Energy, "Cyber-Informed Engineering," accessed October 24, 2026. (https://www.energy.gov/ceser/cyber-informed-engineering); Emmerson Overell, "The Pentagon Is Transforming U.S. Commercial Satellites Into Tactical Battlefield Infrastructure," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, May 14, 2026. (https://www.fdd.org/analysis/the-pentagon-is-transforming-u-s-commercial-satellites-into-tactical-battlefield-infrastructure)
[44] Idaho National Laboratory, "Cyber-Informed Engineering Implementation Guide," Version 1.0, August 7, 2023, page 27. (https://inldigitallibrary.inl.gov/sites/sti/sti/Sort_67122.pdf)

COMBINE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT WITH LOCAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The RFI explicitly asks how public-private partnerships could finance spaceports. Federal and state investment could support shared roads, ports, utilities, and secure satellite-preparation facilities while companies and private investors finance facilities serving their operations.[45] Long-term leases and authorized user charges can help recover construction and maintenance costs. Agreements should specify contributions, access terms, construction milestones, and responsibility for upkeep, giving investors greater certainty about project costs and future use.

The government already buys launch services from commercial providers, including through multiyear contracts.[46] Continuing to pair credible forecasts of future launch needs with sustained purchases and, where appropriate, additional long-term contracts could give companies and investors greater confidence to finance expanded launch infrastructure and rocket development.

Infrastructure investment can expand launch capacity and generate jobs and revenue for local communities. Amazon reports investing more than $200 million in ULA's Cape Canaveral infrastructure and services to increase launch capacity.[47] Louisiana projects 3,000 direct jobs over 10 years from its planned SpaceX campus.[48] Under its payment-in-lieu-of-taxes agreement, SpaceX will pay local taxing bodies $20 million up front and at least $25 million annually for 25 years.[49]

Spaceport development could also attract suppliers, research facilities, and visitors who come to watch launches, as on Florida's Space Coast.[50] States should weigh those opportunities against tax incentives and added demands on housing and public services. Developers and communities could negotiate commitments to support schools, emergency services, and other local needs, alongside measures to address noise and traffic. Louisiana's incentive agreement includes a separate $25 million SpaceX donation to the Community Foundation of Acadiana.[51] Clear, measurable local commitments could help build community support.

The June audit from NASA's inspector general identified two financing problems: legal barriers to accepting commercial funding for improvements to NASA-owned infrastructure and

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[45] Mark Montgomery and Emmerson Overell, "Elon Musk built the rockets. Washington forgot to build the roads," *Washington Examiner*, September 26, 2026. (https://www.fdd.org/analysis/elon-musk-built-the-rockets-washington-forgot-to-build-the-roads)
[46] U.S. Government Accountability Office, "National Security Space Launch: Increased Commercial Use of Ranges Underscores Need for Improved Cost Recovery," GAO-25-107228, June 30, 2025, pages 20-22. (https://files.gao.gov/reports/GAO-25-107228/index.html)
[47] Amazon Staff, "Amazon Leo set to accelerate satellite production and launch cadence," *About Amazon*, March 23, 2026. (https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/amazon-leo/amazon-leo-plans-double-launch-rate-20-missions)
[48] Louisiana Economic Development, "SpaceX in Louisiana," accessed October 24, 2026. (https://www.opportunitylouisiana.gov/spacex)
[49] Louisiana Economic Development, "SpaceX in Louisiana," accessed October 24, 2026. (https://www.opportunitylouisiana.gov/spacex)
[50] Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism, "Explore Florida's Space Coast," accessed October 24, 2026. (https://www.visitspacecoast.com)
[51] Louisiana Economic Development, "SpaceX in Louisiana," accessed October 24, 2026. (https://www.opportunitylouisiana.gov/spacex)

inadequate recovery of shared maintenance costs at Kennedy.[52] NASA should build on its existing cost-recovery tools and complete the inspector general's recommended assessment of an additional charge for shared institutional maintenance at Kennedy. DOT should also work with NASA and Congress to address remaining statutory barriers to commercial capital contributions. Clearer rules would let companies help fund infrastructure they use and provide more dependable funding for upkeep.

ALLIED SPACEPORTS REPRESENT ADDITIONAL LAUNCH ALTERNATIVES

Allied spaceports can provide additional routes to orbit.[53] DOT should work with the Department of State, Department of Defense (DOD), and host governments to expand allied launch options for U.S. government and commercial customers.

New Zealand demonstrated this value through VICTUS HAZE. Its technology safeguards agreement with Washington protects sensitive U.S. rocket and satellite technology used there.[54] Similar agreements with Australia and the United Kingdom provide foundations for cooperation, but individual launch activities still require applicable U.S. and host-country licenses and permits.[55]

Cooperation with Australia and the United Kingdom could build on the three-country AUKUS defense partnership, which has already helped advance military space capabilities. The Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC), a radar network being developed to track objects in orbit from sites in all three countries, is one example.[56] Existing bilateral partnerships provide further foundations for space cooperation. Australia and the United States jointly operate Pine Gap, a key satellite and signals intelligence facility in central Australia, while the British RAF Fylingdales base provides ballistic missile warning and tracks satellites for the U.S. and UK governments.[57] Extending these partnerships to joint launch infrastructure development could expand launch options and create business opportunities in all three countries.

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[52] NASA Office of Inspector General, "NASA's Launch Infrastructure," Report No. IG-26-010, June 22, 2026. (https://oig.nasa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/final-report-ig-26-010-nasas-launch-infrastructure.pdf)
[53] RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery and Emmerson Overell, "America Must Be Able to Restore Its Space Power at War Speed," *RealClearDefense*, September 21, 2026. (https://www.fdd.org/analysis/america-must-be-able-to-restore-its-space-power-at-war-speed)
[54] U.S. Department of State, "New Zealand (16-1212) – Technology Safeguards Associated with United States Participation in Space Launches in New Zealand," December 12, 2016. (https://2017-2021.state.gov/16-1212)
[55] U.S. Department of State, "U.S.-Australia Technology Safeguards Agreement," October 26, 2023. (https://2021-2025.state.gov/u-s-australia-technology-safeguards-agreement); U.S. Department of State, "U.S.-U.K. Technology Safeguards Agreement," June 17, 2020. (https://2017-2021.state.gov/u-s-uk-technology-safeguards-agreement); Australian Space Agency, "Technology Safeguards Agreement," section "Does the TSA provide a blanket approval to all launch activities?" accessed October 24, 2026. (https://www.space.gov.au/technology-safeguards-agreement)
[56] U.S. Space Force, "US, UK, Australia announce trilateral Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability initiative," December 2, 2023. (https://www.spaceforce.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/3604036/us-uk-australia-announce-trilateral-deep-space-advanced-radar-capability-initia); U.S. Space Force, "US Space Force selects Texas as preferred location for third DARC site," September 9, 2026. (https://www.spaceforce.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/4592096/us-space-force-selects-texas-as-preferred-location-for-third-darc-site)
[57] Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, "Pine Gap – an introduction," February 21, 2016. (https://nautilus.org/publications/books/australian-forces-abroad/defence-facilities/pine-gap/pine-gap-intro); Royal Air Force, "RAF Fylingdales," accessed October 24, 2026. (https://www.raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/stations/raf-fylingdales)

Canada also offers an opportunity to extend existing defense and military space cooperation to launch infrastructure. Washington and Ottawa coordinate North American defense through the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), which uses satellite and radar data to detect and track threats.[58] Canadian officers also work alongside American, Australian, and British personnel at the Combined Space Operations Center at Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, which coordinates satellite communications and missile warning for U.S. and allied forces.[59] Canada is also currently investing in its own domestic spaceport development.[60] DOT, with the State Department and DOD, should explore Canadian interest in joint spaceport development or expansion and assess feasibility. Joint projects could create business and job opportunities in both countries.

Expanding domestic launch capacity should remain a U.S. national security priority. Cooperation with close, steadfast allies such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada could complement that investment by providing additional launch options and geographically dispersed alternatives during crises or disruptions in domestic launch capabilities. Joint development of space technology and launch infrastructure could also spread costs among partners while strengthening military and commercial ties.

CONCLUSION

America's military advantage and commercial space growth depend on reliable access to orbit. Securing launch infrastructure, capacity, and capability for the present and future is essential to U.S. national and economic security.

On behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, I appreciate DOT and FAA's consideration of these comments.

[58] North American Aerospace Defense Command, "About NORAD," accessed October 24, 2026. (https://www.norad.mil/About-NORAD/NORAD-Missions)
[59] U.S. Space Forces-Space, "Combined Space Operations Center / Space Delta 5," accessed October 24, 2026. (https://www.spaceforces-space.mil/About-S4S/Warfighting-Units/CSpOC-Combined-Space-Operations-Center)
[60] Department of National Defence, Canada, "Minister McGuinty announces strategic advancements for Canada's sovereign space capabilities," October 21, 2026. (https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2026/10/minister-mcguinty-announces-strategic-advancements-for-canadas-sovereign-space-capabilities.html)