

Defence leaders to join forces at 2020 Space Conference

Organised by the MOD and the Air and Space Power Association, the conference will tackle the challenges presented by space as a military domain and the wider economic opportunities on offer. Speakers at the event will include government ministers, the Chief of the Air Staff and Commander UK Strategic Command, alongside senior leaders from the National Space Council and the newly formed US Space Command.

The MOD will use the conference to outline its strategy to counter threats posed to UK satellites and other space assets, and ensure they are protected. Up to 400 delegates from across defence will come together to discuss the next-generation technology, infrastructure and workforce necessary to keep pace with the rapidly evolving threats facing the UK in space.

Defence Minister James Heappey said:

From supporting military operations to predicting weather patterns, accessing information from our satellites is crucial to both our security and our prosperity. Protecting our satellites demands the development of cutting-edge equipment so we're inviting the brightest and best from industry, academia and across government to discuss the transformative technology out there today.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, said:

Defence Space 2020 will be a timely demonstration of the UK's ambition in the Space Domain: our future programmes; the opportunities as well as the challenges to our national interests in space; and a showcase for our world-class space industrial sector. Our inaugural Conference in 2018 was a huge success; the 2020 Conference will be even better.

Air Marshal (Ret'd) Greg Bagwell CB CBE, President, Air & Space Power Association, said:

As the Space Domain takes on even greater significance for defence and evolves at such a pace, it is vital that we continue to debate the critical issues in the most open and diverse forum possible.

Defence Space 2020 will provide a springboard for the next phase of conceptual thinking, discussion and development of the UK's approach to Space Power. Of particular importance is how emergent and disruptive technologies may play a part in the use of Space in

the defence and security contexts and how the UK shapes its future strategic alliances with international space partners.

The Conference promises to be a stimulating and informative exposé of MOD's Space Power direction of travel and I am delighted that the Air and Space Power Association is again delivering the event.

The announcement of the conference follows a string of recent announcements on the UK's military space programme. In October, the RAF selected a pilot to be seconded to Virgin Orbit's ground-breaking small satellite launch programme. Flt Lt Mathew Stannard, currently a Typhoon pilot, will join the fleet of expert 'test pilots' trialling Boeing 747-400 aircraft from which cutting-edge satellites will be launched.

At the RAF's Air and Space Power Conference last year the MOD outlined an ambitious space programme, committing £30m to fast-track the launch of a small satellite demonstrator. The small satellite demonstrator, also known as Programme ARTEMIS, is being delivered by a new transatlantic team of UK and US defence personnel and industry partners.

The MOD also announced the UK as the first formal partner in the US-led Operation Olympic Defender – a multinational military effort formed to strengthen deterrence against hostile actors in space, enhance resilience and preserve the safety of spaceflight.