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Figure caption: The seal of the United States Space Force. **Photo Credit:** US Space Force, public domain via Wikipedia Commons



The U.S. Space Force – Always Above

By Lauren Likkel

Did you hear about the Space Force second year anniversary? No, not the Netflix “Space Force, Season 2” released last month. The US Space Force formed on December 20, 2019 and yes, it is a real thing. It inspired the Netflix series with Steve Carell (season 1 in 2020), which was not an immediate hit but could become a cult classic.

The United States Space Force is a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and is the newest branch of the military. It grew out the Air Force Space Command. The motto on the US Space Force official website is “Always above.” The Space Force is different from the U.S. Space Command, which states on its official website that it “ensures there is never a day without space”.

“Outer space” is the business of NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which is engaged in scientific exploration and civil spaceflight. Most satellites that NASA operates look away from Earth, outward into space. But the Space Force is concerned with the “space” just above Earth, not stars, galaxies, or extending our knowledge of the universe.

The Space Force is a technology-focused military service with a focus on aerospace and engineering. That includes the tens of thousands of satellites and pieces of space junk orbiting Earth. Satellites are critical to protect since they are used for communication, commerce, weather, and understanding the planet and the human activities on it. Satellites are important in modern warfare and Russia's war on Ukraine will probably involve satellite attacks such as jamming and spoofing GPS satellites. Last November Russia tested a weapon that destroyed a satellite, leaving debris that endangered the International Space Station and the astronauts on it. Russia has also tested satellites that can maneuver and fire projectiles at other satellites. And China already has at least one satellite that can approach and pull other satellites out of orbit.

The Chief of Space Operations of the Space Force is a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which advises the president. Like the Air Force, it is under the Department of the Air force (as the Marine Corps is under the Department of the Navy). If you become a member of the Space Force you will be called a "Guardian". In the army, members are "Soldiers", in the navy they are "Sailors", and the Air Force uses the term "Airmen" (when will they change that to "Aviators"?). I think "Guardians" is better than "Spacemen", although it makes me feel like watching the 2014 movie "Guardians of the Galaxy" which I will do right after I'm done binging "Space Force" on Netflix.

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