

54TH IISL COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE (E7)
Recent Developments in Space Law (5)

Author: Prof. Carl Christol
University of Southern California, United States

CURRENT AMERICAN FOCUS ON SPACE LAW AND ACTIVITIES

Abstract

In 2011 the United States demonstrated an active interest in space law and activities. Leadership roles occupied the attention of citizens seeking space-produced benefits. At the White House there was the 2010 pronouncement on governmental policy and security needs in the face of possible cyberwarfare and active terrorists. There was a marked focus in the Obama administration's policy announcement of June 28, 2010 where attention was given to accidental collisions and debris, transparency and confidence building, arms control, including missile testing, remote sensing, global positioning, and earth observation. Reference was made to the efficient sharing of the radio spectrum. Assignment of specific areas of authority was given to NASA and to affected Departments of the national government.

Finding sufficient financial resources to cover the costs of running the national government, as well as those of the states, have become an increasingly difficult problem in recent years. Mandatory government spending at the national level, in the form of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and interest on the national debt have increased allowing for smaller sums available for discretionary funds. For example, discretionary funds have shrunk from 67.5% in 1961 to 27.7% estimated for 2016. Funding for NASA is a case in point. Over the past five years Constellation, being constructed for the manned-moon project, has cost about \$9 billion and has resulted in one scaled-down test flight. In July, 2010, the funding of the project was terminated by the U. S. Senate following an Obama proposal. With this there would be substantial reductions in employment. Some relief was suggested by governmental engagement in supporting private launch companies. But overall the federal government's involvement in the area of space activities is bound to shrink. An exception to this is the increasing use of drones in military activities.