

27th SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE POLICY, REGULATIONS AND ECONOMICS (E3)
29th IAA/IISL Scientific-Legal Roundtable: Controlling the Eyes in the Sky: Preventing Abuse of Space
Data (5-E7.6)

Author: Dr. Fabio Tronchetti
Harbin Institute of Technology, China, fabio.tronchetti@yahoo.com

SECURITY AND POTENTIAL (ANTI-) TERRORISM ASPECTS OF HIGH RESOLUTION EARTH
OBSERVATION DATA

Abstract

The use of high resolution space earth observation data is certainly beneficial for a broad array of civil purposes but, at the same time, raises numerous legal questions related to the possible misuse of such data. An area of particular concern is that of security, as the dissemination and utilization of high resolution space products can potentially undermine the security of states both at international and national level. For example, in the hands of terrorists, these data can be employed to threaten public order. The security implications of high resolution space earth observation data are magnified, on one side by the increasing availability of these data and, on the other side, by the fact that access to them is provided by both states and private operators. Legal and technical regulations and procedures to prevent the misuse of high resolution earth observation products are already in place; however, their ability to effectively counteract the growing security threats associated with the utilization of these products can be questioned. The purpose of the present paper is to analyze the extent to which the law' currently does, viz. will, viz. should regulate the security implications and the potential misuse of data, both by governments private subjects, e.g. terrorists or hacker groups. In doing so, the paper will explore the feasibility of introducing protective mechanisms, such as 'firewalls' and criminalization of leaking data, in a comprehensive manner into the space sector.