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TERRORISM AND SPACE SECURITY

Abstract

Terrorism in the broadest terms is the deliberate use of indiscriminate violence to bring about terror or fear to achieve a political or ideological aim. Terrorist tactics have been utilised for hundreds of years, although in the last thirty years they have risen to prominence due to the advent of television and the internet being a multiplying factor in spreading fear. Two examples are the IRA bombings in London from 1971 to 2000, and the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington DC.

During the same period society's reliance on space for everyday functions has dramatically increased. Satellites are relied upon for navigation, communication, food distribution systems, financial markets and many more systems which impact on every day life. This makes satellite systems particularly attractive to terrorist groups because of the dramatic impact such an attack would have on most of the population of the earth.

This paper will firstly examine the impact that such terrorist tactics has on space security, both in the traditional sense of strategic stability and in the more contemporary understanding of space security. Secondly we will examine the situation that in the past space has been seen largely as a competition between nations (i.e. the "space race") with a militaristic view of how to control activities, however with the dramatic increase in commercial operators in space combined with the potential threat of non-state groups threatening space security through terrorist activities, that there might be a need to move away from a militaristic control towards a policing approach to activities in space.