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Space Traffic Management: From Space Situational Awareness and Space Surveillance and Tracking to developing Rules of the Road (4)

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IMPLEMENTING STATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SPACE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS: TOWARDS  
PROTECTING SPACE ENVIRONMENT

**Abstract**

The first step towards protection of outer space from collision between space objects is the ability to “see” what is happening in outer space or space situational awareness (SSA). Operational space objects mostly have a capability to maneuver themselves. For example, the Iridium-Cosmos collision would not have happened had USA could predict the collision. This raises an important issue as the USA is perhaps the most advanced country in SSA and yet USA was not even close to predicting the Iridium-Cosmos collision. Only a few countries, such as the USA, Russia, China and India, have SSA capabilities to monitor all the space objects and there is no legal obligation on these States to share such information. Further, as we saw in Iridium-Cosmos collision, it is clearly not enough for one State to have SSA capabilities as technology developed by one State may fallible and more States should develop such technology. This brings back to the question whether spacefaring nations can be obligated to develop SSA technologies and whether States with the existing SSA capabilities be obligated to transfer such technology to the other States. Therefore, this paper will deal with State responsibility to share technology with regards to SSA in order to protect the space environment from damage by a space object. However, this raises interesting propositions. Can a State be compelled to share information of its strategic satellites more than it is required under the Registration Convention? Can the due regard principle be extended to cover such cases? Further, can a State reveal information about strategic satellites of another State in order to facilitate SSA? My paper will address the responsibility for sharing SSA information and how to carve a workable framework towards implementing it.