

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 13, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

General B. Chance Saltzman
United States Space Force
Washington, D.C. 20330

Dear General Saltzman:

The world has crossed into a new, concerning frontier: war in space. As conflict rages in Ukraine, China continues to threaten Taiwan and show aggression in the South China Sea, and Israel seeks to defend itself against Iranian-backed Hamas terrorists, we must remain vigilant on all fronts, including in space.

On October 31, 2023, Iranian-sponsored Houthi terrorists launched a ballistic missile from Yemen intended to strike Israel, our greatest ally in the Middle East. The missile flew almost 1,000 miles over the Arabian Peninsula until it was successfully intercepted by Israeli Defense Forces. This successful interception occurred outside of the Earth's atmosphere, making it the first recorded instance of space warfare during an active conflict in world history.¹ We are gravely concerned about this new theater of war that has opened.

Our adversaries have been emboldened, and the New Axis of Evil—China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea—have grown more united. When war in this new theater comes, it will not spare the United States and our allies. Let us be clear: this attack against our ally, Israel, was intended to send a message to America. The Houthis' slogan has long been: “God is the greatest; death to America; death to Israel, curse the Jews; victory to Islam.”² And the Houthis do not act alone. They are backed by Iran, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism.

Not only does the New Axis of Evil have the intent to do us harm, but they also now have the capacity. Recent reports indicate that U.S. warships in the region are within the range of Houthi missiles, and China has a rapidly developing counterspace weaponry program and the space architecture that will enable them to execute long-range precision strikes.³ We must be ready to confront this challenge and defend ourselves and our interests, whether on Earth or in outer space.

¹ Jerusalem Post Staff, *Israel Downing Houthi Missile is First Instance of Space Warfare*, JERUSALEM POST (November 6, 2023), <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/defense-news/article-771910>.

² Maha El Dahan, *Yemen's Houthis Enter Mideast Fray, Hardening Spillover Fears*, REUTERS (October 31, 2023), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemens-houthis-enter-mideast-fray-hardening-spillover-fears>.

³ Emily Olson, *Pentagon says it Shot Down Yemen Missiles that May Have Been Headed Towards Israel*, NPR (October 20, 2023), <https://www.npr.org/2023/10/20/1207523642/yemen-missiles-intercepted>.

Given that the planned test launch of our new hypersonic missile system was cancelled in September, we are concerned about military readiness in the face of these new threats.⁴ With that in mind, please provide an update at your earliest convenience on our capacity to defend the United States in this emerging age of space warfare.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator

⁴ Anthony Capaccio, *US Army Cancels Flight Test of Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon*, BLOOMBERG (September 6, 2023), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-09-07/us-army-cancels-flight-test-of-long-range-hypersonic-weapon>.