

**National Security Space Institute**

<https://nssi.spaceforce.mil>

# READING LIST

2026

## DISCLAIMER

The National Security Space Institute's 2026 reading list contains six volumes intended to challenge conventional thinking and spur intellectual growth and development. The views expressed in these publications are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government.



# ABOUT

**The NSSI's 2026 Reading List is recommended reading for U.S. Department of War and international-partner space professionals.**

The annual reading list is intended to spur intellectual growth, enhance professional development, promote lifelong learning, and foster traits highlighted in the USSF Guardian Ideal. These works provide a launching point for expanding existing knowledge, developing professional skills, and challenging conventional thinking about the profession. The recommended reading also introduces students and space professionals to the insights of NSSI educators and their recommendations for lifelong learning.

These lists—complete with book and author descriptions—are not only distributed to students enrolled in NSSI courses but also disseminated to space and defense professionals worldwide.

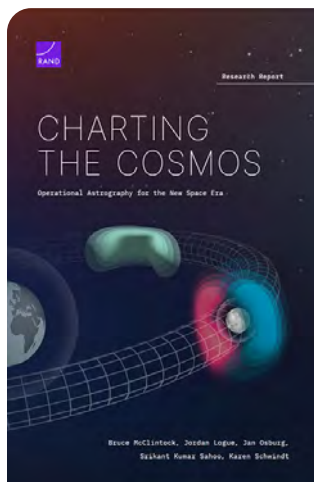
## POC

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# CHARTING THE COSMOS

## OPERATIONAL ASTROGRAPHY FOR THE NEW SPACE ERA



As space activity grows exponentially, so does the complexity of navigating the orbital environment. Charting the Cosmos provides a forward-looking framework for what the authors term “operational astrography”—a systematic approach to tracking, understanding, and maneuvering within space.

By mastering the principles of astrography, military space professionals can bridge the gap between abstract space science and concrete operational application. This book will help leaders anticipate dynamic orbital conditions, optimize logistics, and integrate space domain awareness into broader joint operations.

By providing a common set of terms and definitions, Charting the Cosmos facilitates clearer communication and a unified understanding of the operational environment—critical for planning and executing complex missions in a contested domain. This foundational text is poised to shape the joint doctrine and strategic thinking of space warfighters for years to come.

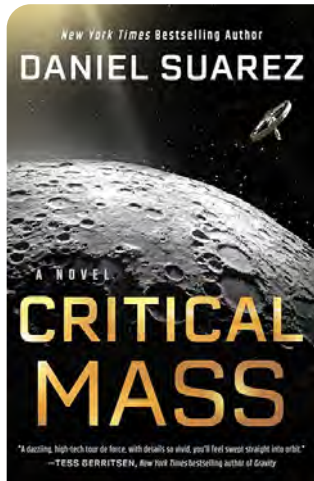
### Significance to the Space Guardian

For USSF Guardians and other space warfighters, this book is an indispensable resource that establishes a much-needed common lexicon for operating within an astrographic area of responsibility (AOR). It offers a clear and intuitive way to conceptualize the battlespace, moving beyond ambiguous and technically dense descriptions. As the USSF shifts toward more dynamic space operations that require frequent and rapid maneuver, a shared astrographic language is essential.

**By Bruce McClintock, Jordan Logue, Jan Osburg, Srikant Kumar Sahoo, and Karen Schwindt**

# CRITICAL MASS

## A NOVEL



Daniel Suarez's *Critical Mass* is a meticulously researched science fiction novel that picks up where its predecessor, *Delta-V*, left off, plunging readers into a near-future where cislunar space has become a high-stakes geopolitical reality. Weaving a narrative of daring rescue, corporate espionage, and groundbreaking engineering, the novel is set against the backdrop of a planet grappling with an escalating climate crisis and governments paralyzed by political infighting.

The story follows the surviving members of the first commercial asteroid-mining mission as they embark on a seemingly impossible quest: to rescue two of their crewmates stranded in deep space aboard the mining ship Konstantin. What unfolds is a breathtaking depiction of ingenuity as they leverage the resources mined from the

asteroid Ryugu to construct vital in-space infrastructure, effectively jump-starting a viable space economy.

### Significance to the Space Guardian

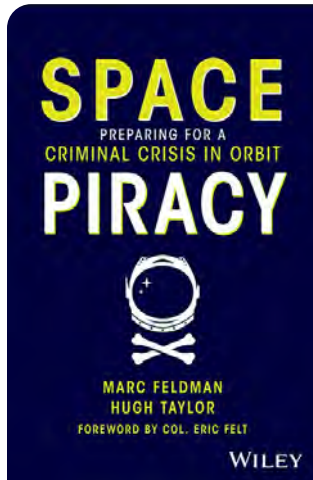
For USSF Guardians, *Critical Mass* offers a powerful and deeply plausible perspective on their future operational domain. Suarez portrays cislunar space as a contested and economically vital region where corporate and state actors vie for resources and strategic advantage. The novel underscores the critical importance of infrastructure, such as space stations and lunar mass drivers, highlighting their significance to future “hybrid” conflicts.

Space professionals will gain a sharper appreciation for the tactical challenges ahead by reading *Critical Mass*, from defending critical assets to operating where the lines between civilian and military are increasingly blurred.

By Daniel Suarez

# SPACE PIRACY

## PREPARING FOR A CRIMINAL CRISIS IN ORBIT



As commercial and civil space activity expands, so too do the possibilities for non-state, criminal, and unauthorized behavior in orbit.

*Space Piracy* directly addresses this emerging frontier of criminal risk — from satellite hacking and data theft to physical interception and unauthorized capture of space assets.

Taylor and Feldman draw on legal analysis, historical analogy, and forward-thinking scenarios to outline how international law, enforcement frameworks, and cross-domain cooperation must evolve.

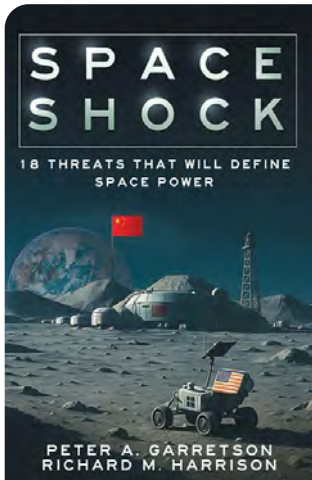
### Significance to the Space Guardian

USSF Guardians will benefit from this book's exploration of prevention, deterrence, and response mechanisms for orbital crime. Understanding how to integrate legal, technical, and operational tools against criminal threats is increasingly vital as space becomes more congested and commercially integrated.

**By Marc Feldman & Hugh Taylor**

# SPACE SHOCK

## 18 THREATS THAT WILL DEFINE SPACE POWER



Space is no longer a benign frontier — it is a domain shaped by risk, competition, and rapid technological change.

In *Space Shock*, Garretson and Harrison outline 18 strategic, operational, and technological threats that are redefining how nations think about space power.

From anti-satellite capabilities and congestion in key orbits to cybersecurity vulnerabilities and contested norms of behavior, the book offers a comprehensive look at the challenges that will shape the future of space dominance.

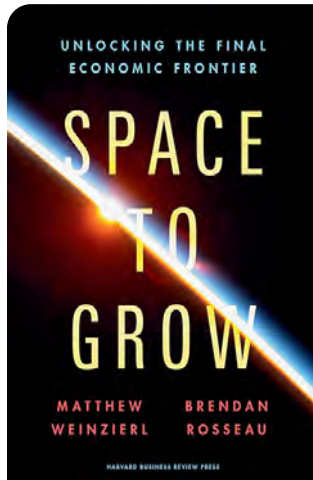
### Significance to the Space Guardian

USSF Guardians will find this book essential for understanding the multidimensional character of space threats and how they intersect with policy, doctrine, and capability development. By confronting these threats head-on, readers will be better positioned to anticipate adversary behavior, inform resilient posture planning, and contribute to cohesive deterrence strategies in the evolving space domain.

**By Peter A. Garretson / Richard M. Harrison**

# SPACE TO GROW

## UNLOCKING THE FINAL ECONOMIC FRONTIER



Space is no longer merely a domain for exploration and defense – it is shifting into a dynamic commercial economy.

In *Space to Grow*, Harvard Business School professor Matthew Weinzierl and Blue Origin strategist Brendan Rosseau trace the forces driving the shift: the dramatic drop in launch costs, the rise of private actors like SpaceX, Blue Origin, Planet, and Astroscale, and the emergence of new markets such as debris removal, commercial stations, and in space manufacturing. They also unpack the complex economic principles at play, from market failures to the tragedy of the commons to the legal debates surrounding resource rights and mining.

### Significance to the Space Guardian

For Guardians and other space warfighters, this book provides an essential framework for understanding how commercial incentives and private sector vulnerabilities now shape the operational environment. By grounding modern space activity in clear economic principles, *Space to Grow* equips Guardians with the literacy needed to anticipate commercial behavior, assess strategic risks, and operate effectively in an increasingly crowded and commercially driven domain.

By Matthew Weinzierl / Brendan Rosseau

# WAR IN THE SMARTPHONE AGE

## CONFLICT, CONNECTIVITY AND THE CRISES AT OUR FINGERTIPS



Modern conflict is no longer confined to traditional battlefields—it now unfolds across networks, platforms, and the devices we carry every day. In *War in the Smartphone Age*, Ford examines how smartphones have become integral weapons themselves, shaping how wars are conducted, understood, and represented.

Ford argues that modern conflict is fought with and over a “digital stack” of interconnected civilian and military infrastructure, including satellite-enabled systems and tools. He examines the phenomenon of “accelerated war,” where the time between identifying and striking a target is reduced to the speed of data, and the concept of “participative warfare,” where civilians are no longer mere bystanders but active participants using their phones to collect targeting data or crowdfund military actions.

### Significance to the Space Guardian

*War in the Smartphone Age* will offer USSF Guardians and other space warfighters crucial insights into how adversaries might exploit the very connectivity that enables modern military operations. Ford’s ideas directly translate to the challenges of defending against threats in the space domain, where the speed of data is paramount and where civilian and commercial assets are increasingly intertwined with national security.

By Matthew Ford

**VICTORY BEGINS IN THE MIND**

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NATIONAL SECURITY SPACE INSTITUTE

EDUCATING AND INSPIRING SPACE WARRIORS AND LEADERS

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