

## Japan's Ministry of Defense: Opening Space Security to the Commercial Sector

By

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On February 28, 2024, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of Tokyo, which is also Japan's largest start-up hub, held a Japan Air Self-Defense Force-sponsored [online event](#), "Space Security and Business: International Collaboration and Private Sector Cooperation Driving Space Security and Business Prospects." The Japanese government first announced its [Space Security Initiative](#) in June 2023. The plan addresses security from space, security in space, and the support and development of the Japanese space industry.

Since June 2023, there is increasing attention on space security, with a particular focus on collaboration with private-sector space businesses. In situations like the Ukraine conflict, private companies' satellite imagery and satellite communication services are utilized. It is therefore crucial for the Japanese government to leverage the technology and innovation of private companies, and for the private sector to integrate space security into their business. Close collaboration between the two, advancing public-private partnerships, is a key factor.

The event opened and closed with Kenji Minami, Director, Business Planning Division 2 of the Defense Department, Air Staff Office, at the Japanese Ministry of Defense. The first keynote session, "The Forefront of Public-Private Collaboration in the Security Domain: The Case of the United States," was delivered by Yasuhito Fukushima, Senior Researcher at the Global Security Laboratory of the Policy Research Department at the National Institute for Defense Studies in Tokyo. The session reviewed the current American model of space development. It took a close look at several programs (SpaceWERX), US efforts at connecting industries with government, and expanding the industrial base of space innovation, along the motto: "Exploit What We Have, Buy What We Can, and Build Only What We Must." Kenji Minami moderated the ensuing panel discussion, "Expectations for Private Companies to Strengthen Space Security," which gathered participants from the National Institute for Defense Studies in Tokyo, the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, and Keio University, at senior researcher, director, and professor level, respectively.

Masayasu Ishida, CEO of SPACETIDE, moderated the second part of the event, with a session called, "Opportunities and Challenges in Space Security from the Perspective of private companies." It featured the C-Suite representatives of three Japanese space Businesses: Shunji Izutsu, Vice President of Astroscale Co., Ltd., Akiko Kitahara, Executive Vice President and CFO of Warp Space Co., Ltd., and Yoshihiro Ota, Executive Officer and CSO of Axel Space Holdings Co., Ltd. [Astroscale](#) is dedicated to on-orbit servicing, such as active debris removal, refueling, and space situational awareness. [Warp Space](#) is focused on solving the problem of communication via optical link. [Axel Space](#) is a global leader in micro-satellite technology with a strong Earth-observation focus.

The session discussed the potential for public-private cooperation. The three representatives spoke about the potential and challenges of space security-oriented business from the perspective of commercial companies, taking examples from current conflicts and issues. The discussion covered the importance of community building through regular events, and the use of study contracts to demonstrate and introduce new private-sector technologies.

Topics such as legal, financial, commercial, and technical development challenges related to dual-use technologies, and managing risk when involving commercial entities as services providers in relation with a conflict zone, were also reviewed.

On the same day this Space Security and Business event took place, SPACETIDE, the co-organizer of the event, announced that it had been awarded the Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry Award at the 6th Space Development and Utilization Grand Prize for its significant contributions to the advancement of the space business and the formation of the industrial ecosystem. The selection committee commended SPACETIDE for its significant contributions to the formation of the space industry community in Japan, comprehensive research on the space industry, promotion of networking among entrepreneurs and businesses, and facilitation of talent mobility—thereby contributing to the promotion of the space business and the formation of the space industry ecosystem, fostering national awareness and understanding, while promoting sustainable space utilization.

The conference was a clear demonstration that Japan is on the right track to develop a strong industrial base that sustains the nation’s space power development course for both civilian and defense purposes. The Japanese government and its Ministry of Defense are dedicated to advancing close collaboration with the private sector in the field of space security. And as its defense strategy aims at deploying a more [credible space deterrent](#), the nation of Japan further positions itself as a reliable ally of the US in the Indo-Pacific region.

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