

Senate Confirms Navy and Space Force Chiefs Amid Defense Strategy Disputes

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The U.S. Senate has confirmed Admiral Daryl Caudle as Chief of Naval Operations and General B. Chance Saltzman as Chief of Space Operations, resolving long-standing vacancies in two key military branches. Their appointments come during intense debate over national defense priorities, as lawmakers weigh strategic competition with China against evolving space and maritime threats.

Admiral Caudle's confirmation follows Senator Dan Sullivan's decision to lift a hold on the nomination. Sullivan had sought a commitment from the administration to consider reopening the former Adak Naval Air Station in Alaska. After discussions with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, the Senate approved Caudle to lead the Navy, ending a six-month leadership gap.

General Saltzman, now confirmed as the second-ever leader of the Space Force, brings extensive operational experience in cyber, nuclear, and satellite defense. His elevation reinforces the service's growing role in U.S. national security and space superiority. The Senate approved his nomination unanimously.

Earlier this year, Saltzman and newly appointed Air Force Secretary Troy Meink warned the Senate Armed Services Committee that U.S. air and space power must adapt rapidly to address rising threats from China and other adversaries. They urged greater investment in missile defense systems, next-generation fighter jets, and hardened satellite networks.

Admiral Caudle is expected to prioritize forward-deployed naval strength, undersea warfare, and maritime deterrence. Meanwhile, Saltzman will continue pushing to define space control as a critical warfighting capability, stressing the need for advanced technologies and readiness across the domain.

Their confirmations align with broader efforts in Congress to boost military modernization. A proposed 2026 defense budget would significantly increase funding for Navy and Air Force platforms, including the F-35, B-21 stealth bomber, Virginia-class submarines, and the Space Force's Golden Dome missile defense program.

While some critics caution that expanding missions without reinforcing recruitment and support structures could strain the force, defense leaders argue that placing experienced officers at the helm is key to aligning military capacity with strategic objectives.

As Admiral Caudle and General Saltzman assume their posts, the Department of Defense prepares to intensify its focus on maintaining U.S. dominance across air, sea, and space. The Senate's approvals mark a pivotal moment in recalibrating America's global military posture for a more contested and competitive era.