

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



COL Ronan Ellis is an ROTC graduate and entered the Army in 1961 in the field artillery. He spent most of his career except for the last four years in the artil-

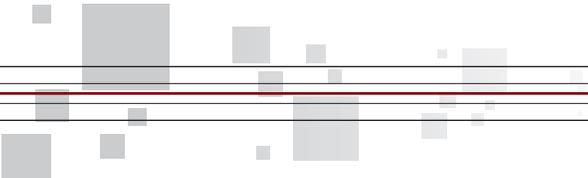
lery business commanding artillery batteries, battalion, and brigade, in Korea, Vietnam and Germany. In the latter part of his career he was selected to be the first Commandant of the Army Space Institute and eventually the second commander of U.S. Army Space Command.

The following text is an edited version of a historical interview between COL Ellis and U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command historian, LaJeannia Lacey. You can find the complete transcript of the interview online at <http://www.smdc-armyforces.army.mil/ASJ/>



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 COL (Ret) Ronan I. Ellis
 (1940 -)

June 1961	Field Artillery Commission through Hofstra University ROTC
June 1965 – July 1966	Battery Commander, 1/77 Field Artillery, 1st Cavalry Division, Korea.
May 1968 – January 1969	May 1968 – January 1969 Battery Commander, 3/18th Field Artillery, American Division, Vietnam.
January 1979 – January 1981	Battalion Commander, 1/30th Field Artillery, Augsburg Germany.
June 1983 – December 1984	Commander / Director, U.S. Army Atmospheric Sciences Laboratory, White Sands, N.M.
January 1985 – January 1987	Brigade Commander, 17th Field Artillery, Augsburg, Germany.
January 1987 – April 1989	First Commandant, U.S. Army Space Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Laid the groundwork for providing Space-borne communications, satellite imagery, weather data and positioning data foreground combat operations
May 1989 – April 1991	Second Commander, U.S. Army Space Command, Colorado Springs, Colo. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployed 800 Small Lightweight Global Positioning • System Receivers and up to 10,000 Global Positioning • System Receivers for units participating in Operations • Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Using Space-based • sensors established theater missile warning, which evolved • into the Joint Tactical Ground Station.
May 1991	Retired from the U.S. Army.
May 1991 – June 1996	Director, C4I, General Electric and Lockheed Martin Corporation
June 1996 – January 2002	President, REC, Inc.



▲ Little has been published on early Army Space efforts. Can you provide us some background?

Ellis: Early efforts of the Army in Space were brought about by the Army Space Initiative Study. The study was directed by then Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, GEN Maxwell R. Thurman. He wanted the Army to be more involved in Space and to see what Space could provide the Army. Outgrowths of the study were the Army Space Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and the establishment of a small detachment that became Army Space Command at U.S. Space Command Headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colo.

▲ The Army Space Initiative Study developed the first Army Space Master Plan. How successful has the Army been at accomplishing the goals outlined in this plan?

Ellis: The study and the master plan really didn't attract a lot of attention in the Army. The Army had basically established the Army Space Institute and Army Space Command, but the study and the plan were too far reaching in their initiatives and recommendations for that time. No one in the Army, certainly no one in the leadership of the Army at that time supported it, including GEN Maxwell R. Thurman and GEN Carl Vuono, who was soon to be the Chief of Staff of the Army. They weren't looking long-term, they only wanted to know what we could do now and how were we going to do it. Probably a good deal of what the master plan laid out did come through to fruition, but not so much because of the plan itself, but because of the initiatives of the people at the Army Space Institute and Army Space Command.

▲ What other new missions did ARSPACE receive during this period of growth?

Ellis: ARSPACE didn't receive any new missions. We went out and assumed missions. These missions were established by the force of the command's personalities and knowledge, and by its organization as the Army Space Command, a component command of U.S. Space Command. We took it upon ourselves to be the procurer and trainer of GPS systems and weather systems. We bought things and we sent training teams out. We also established ourselves as the Army proponent for missile defense because of our close relationship with the Army Strategic Defense Command in Huntsville, Ala., and with the Strategic Defense Initiative's (Star Wars) group in Washington, D.C. We became involved in missile warning because that was a mission of U.S. Space Command, but it wasn't really getting to the tactical Army and that effort yielded JTACS. We didn't receive a mission from anybody. In fact, I had a deputy who said, "You know, we haven't gotten any of these missions from the Department of the Army. Why are we doing them?" And I said, "It's our job to determine what our missions are and we will take those missions that are appropriate and execute them." And we did.

▲ The DSCS Operations Centers transferred to Army Space Command in October 1990. Did this new mission reflect your program for the command?

Ellis: Not at all. The Defense Satellite Communications System operations centers were part of a larger command at that time. I think it was the Army Communications Command out of Fort Huachuca, Ariz.,



Shown above is a Small Lightweight GPS Receiver (SLGR) and Satellite Communication set up, circa 1993.

and they had a major mission. The Operation Centers were a small subset of that mission and were assigned to Army Space Command prior to my arrival - much to the concern of the Army's signal center. It certainly got us directly involved very quickly in Space operations, because that's what the OCs did, they controlled the satellites. It turned out to be very successful, and a good start for the command. The personnel came from the Operations Center side of the Defense Satellite Communication System. They were deployed worldwide and they were under the command of the Army Communications Command. The people transferred to us to run this mission, were all senior, noncommissioned officers. They were truly amazing non-commissioned officers and knew everything about DSCS OCs. They sounded like they knew what they were doing. So I let them do it and told them if they had any troubles come to keep me informed. Basically the noncommissioned officers and senior noncommissioned officers of these operation centers put this mission into place.

▲ Operation Desert Storm has been described as the first Space war. In your view, how accurate is that assessment, and what was the impact of the Army Space efforts on the field Army?

Ellis: I think it was the first war that used the Space capabilities to support the Army, and to joint commands in the field. It was not a war in Space, but it did bring to bear Space capabilities to the Army in the field. You could not have had a better impact. These demonstration items and the capabilities that were in Space allowed the Army to realize there was something here and we could then move on from demonstrating commercial applications of existing Space capabilities to starting to state our requirement for future Space capabilities and how we could change the processing of those Space signals. It



The Small Lightweight GPS Receiver (SLGR) was distributed during the Operation Desert Shield/ Desert Storm era to provide GPS capabilities to deploying ground forces and aircraft.

was clear the next step was to actually have a picture of the battle field if the GPS and the radio were integrated. We could go from location to command and control. We have actually been doing that for some time now.

What was your greatest challenge and what was your most significant accomplishment?

Ellis: The greatest challenge was to educate the Army and then execute the programs that would allow Space capabilities to support an Army organization that was sometimes not interested, many times downright negative, and did not want anything to do with these new things. But the more I got into it the stronger I felt about it. I felt this was going to be, in the waning years of my Army career, the most significant thing I could do for my Army. We took these growing Space capabilities and supported the Army and then from that support the Army demanded more, so they got more. I think you can see the kinds of things that are going on now kind of bear that out. That was our biggest challenge and that was our biggest accomplishment.

What do you see as the future for Army Space?

Ellis: I've been retired for eighteen years now so I'm full of history, but I don't know a lot about the future. I was with them last year when they gave me an award as a pioneer in Space and missile defense, so I got to see, so many years later what they're involved in now, and I see there's a tremendous future for the Army. Not so much the Army in Space, but what the Army can receive from Space.

In your view what were the Army Space Institute's successes and failures, and why was it terminated?

Ellis: The Army in Space was brought about by GEN Maxwell Thurman. He didn't know what the Army needed to do in Space but he knew the Army should be doing something. The rest of the Army did not openly embrace Space. There wasn't room for anybody else because all areas of Army capabilities were already taken care of under the charter of each of the schools – artillery, infantry, tanks

and signal. The Army Space Institute stepped on every one of those schools' prerogatives in areas they felt we should not be involved.

The success of the Institute was the demonstration program. The training programs and the initial attempt at developing materiel requirements for Space capabilities were successful although Army Materiel Command never really accepted those. Going forward in time for a moment, at the end of the first Gulf War when Space capabilities were first used by the Army, Materiel Command didn't know quite what to do with commercial GPS receivers that were in all Army units and used extensively throughout the war. They had been bought and delivered by Army Space Command, but since they didn't recognize the method in which they were purchased, they basically zeroed out the budget for those items.

I retired at that time and I was asked what the Space Command should do about the receivers. I said actually nothing. I knew when the troops came home from Desert Storm they would want to know where those devices were. I knew they would be repurchased and reacquired very, very quickly, and they were. The success of the Institute was to get Space capabilities out to the Soldiers, and it was very fortuitous that we did because of what happened in the first Gulf War. The failure of the Institute was not having an organization that was more accepted by other Training and Doctrine organizations, and not having ensured upon my departure that I was replaced by stronger leadership. That is why the Army Space Institute was terminated after I left. There was no strong leadership put in place that could articulate what we were trying to do and there was no lust within Training and Doctrine Command to continue an organization that was chipping away at so many of the other schools' areas of responsibility. 