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Privatizing space brings COMPLICATIONS



In 2025, during a public dispute over government contracts and regulatory matters, SpaceX CEO Elon Musk briefly threatened to decommission the Dragon spacecraft – the vehicle NASA relies on to transport astronauts to orbit, seen here on the launch pad at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station on Feb. 12.

JIM WATSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Relying too heavily on one company can create risks

Svetla Ben-Itzhak
Johns Hopkins University
THE CONVERSATION

Private companies are no longer peripheral participants in U.S. space activities. They provide key services, including launching and deploying satellites, transporting cargo and astronauts to the International Space Station, and even sending landers to the moon.

Commercial integration is now embedded in U.S. space policy and shapes national space strategy. As someone who studies space and international security, I have watched the extraordinary rise of commercial space with awe – and with growing concerns about the structural vulnerabilities it creates.

Access to space, particularly for crewed missions, remains heavily concentrated in one company, SpaceX. While the United States has begun developing alternatives, in operational reality that concentration gives the company disproportionate leverage. If private power and public strategy were to diverge, would Washington have a credible Plan B?

Commercial integration is now official policy

On Feb. 4, the House Science Committee approved the NASA Reauthorization Act of 2026, directing the agency to partner with American commercial providers for operations in low-Earth orbit, lunar landings and the transition beyond the International Space Station. In critical areas such as lunar landers, the bill requires NASA to work with at least two commercial providers – a deliberate effort to avoid dependence on a single company.

President Donald Trump's December 2025 executive order expressed similar preference for prioritizing commercial solutions in federal space activities and set a goal of attracting at least \$50 billion in additional private investment in space by 2028. The U.S. Space Force's 2024 Commercial Space Strategy also emphasizes speed and innovation through private partnerships.

Congress, the White House and the military are aligned: The government sets objectives, then private industry builds – and increasingly operates – the space systems. This shift has been bipartisan and explicit, and it has delivered results.

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City trains employees to recognize human trafficking

Nida Tazeen
Galesburg Register-Mail
USA TODAY NETWORK

Macomb city employees have been trained to identify and respond to human trafficking.

The training, provided by the Center for Prevention of Abuse to all city employees, took place March 23-25, according to a community announcement.

The one-hour course focused on understanding human trafficking, identifying potential warning signs and learning how to safely report suspected situations.

“Protecting the safety of our community is one of our highest priorities,” said Macomb Mayor Michael Inman. “By partnering with the Center for Prevention of Abuse to provide this training to all City staff, we are taking a proactive step to ensure our employees can recognize the signs of human trafficking and respond appropriately. This effort reflects our commitment to awareness, prevention, and standing against exploitation in all forms,” according to the announcement.

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FBI still looking for suspect in 2003 death of IL child

Zach Roth
Peoria Journal Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

The FBI's office in Chicago said last week that they are still searching for the person who killed a 7-year-old boy from Streator in 2003, 23 years to the day that he was found bludgeoned to death.

Dalton Mesarchik was found dead in the Vermillion River on March 27, 2003, one day after he went missing from his home in Streator. The FBI said they and Illinois State Police are continuing to seek the public's help in finding the person that killed him. Anyone with further information is asked to contact

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