

Pentagon pulls the plug on one of the military's most troubled space programs



The Pentagon has canceled a ground control system for the US military's GPS satellite navigation network after the program's enduring problems "proved insurmountable," the US Space Force announced in a press release Monday.

The Global Positioning System Next-Generation Operational Control System, known by the acronym OCX, was officially canceled by Michael Duffey, the Pentagon's defense acquisition executive, on Friday, April 17, the Space Force said.

The decision to terminate the OCX program ends a 16-year, multibillion-dollar effort to design, test, and deliver a command and control system for the military's constellation of GPS navigation satellites. The program consisted of software to handle new signals from the latest generation of GPS satellites, GPS III, which started launching in 2018, along with two master control stations and modifications to ground

monitoring stations around the world.

The Pentagon awarded the OCX contract to Raytheon, now known as RTX Corporation, in 2010, with a timetable for completion in 2016 at a cost of \$3.7 billion. Budget projections to finish the program grew to nearly \$8 billion, nearly as much as the cost of an entire fleet of some 30 new GPS satellites.

The schedule for OCX extended out a decade longer than anticipated. RTX finally delivered the control system to the Space Force last year, but further tests revealed it was still not ready for GPS operations. Ars reported on the long-running issues with OCX last month.

“We discovered problems”

“Regrettably, extensive system issues arose during the integrated testing of OCX with the broader GPS enterprise,” said Col. Stephen Hobbs, commander of the Space Force’s Mission Delta 31, which operates the GPS constellation. “Despite repeated collaborative approaches by the entire government and contractor team, the challenges of onboarding the system in an operationally relevant timeline proved insurmountable.

“We discovered problems across a broad range of capability areas that would put current GPS military and civilian capabilities at risk,” Hobbs said in a statement.

“RTX is aware of the US Government decision regarding the GPS OCX program,” an RTX spokesperson said in a statement. “Raytheon delivered the system in 2025 and has continued to support the US Space Force in post-delivery activities. We remain committed to supporting our customers and will work closely with the government on the next steps.”

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