

US military planning to harvest solar energy in space and beaming it to Earth



NEEL ROBERTS
Sky's the Limit

High energy prices got you down?

Well, look up, way up, for the solution.

According to a recent Zero Hedge article, the newly formed Space Force is planning to harvest solar energy and transmit it back to Earth.

A short video released by the US Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) explains it is currently being targeted for military use.

“Ensuring that a forward operating base maintains reliable power is one of the most dangerous parts of military ground operations. Convoys and supply lines are a major target for adversaries,” the narrator of a new AFRL video said.

According to a Breaking Defense article, the pilot test is this summer and with no issues with weather or cloud cover, the potential is not only unlimited

but could be done on an individual level down the road.

Space Solar Power Incremental Demonstrations and Research Project (SSPIDR) will use an Arachne satellite which converts sun energy to radio frequency and beam it down to a land-based antenna eventually converting to usable power.

Arachne, SSPIDR's flagship experiment, is based on the Helios bus provided by Northrop Grumman Space Systems under a \$25-million contract.

The experimental satellite will carry various day-to-day operating systems and the experimental SSPRITE payload (also being developed by Northrop Grumman) designed to demonstrate solar energy collection, according to SSPIDR Project Manager James Winter.

The idea of harvesting energy from space is nothing new, but the Space Force is finally making it happen.

SKY WATCH

Download this month's sky free chart at whatsouttonight.com/Resources/2021JulSkyWOT.pdf.

On Friday, July 9 look northwest at 9:43 p.m. as the moon follows sundown. Can you spot it above the horizon?

On Sunday, July 11 look northwest-west at 9:42 p.m. after sundown and watch Moon, Mars and Venus before they set around 11 p.m. for the night.

On Sunday, July 25 before 6 a.m. look southwest as Jupiter, moon and Saturn hang out before disappearing into the sunrise sky.

On Tuesday July 27 until the end of the month, look in the constellation Aquarius one to two hours before dawn as it expected debris from comet 96P Machholz will fall at a rate of 15-20 per hour, but the waning gibbous moon will make viewing more difficult.

Neel Roberts is a local astronomer in southern Alberta and welcomes your comments at Neel.Roberts@ptccanada.com and 403-560-6574. Check out his work at www.ptccanada.com.