



**Fourth GREPECAS–RASG-PA Joint Meeting and
Twenty-second Meeting of the CAR/SAM Regional Planning and Implementation Group
(GREPECAS/22)**

Virtual Phase (Asynchronous, 16 September to 11 October 2024)
In-Person Phase (Lima, Peru, 20 to 22 November 2024)

Agenda Item 4: Air Navigation - Global and Regional Developments

DEFINITION AND DELIMITATION OF OUTER SPACE USA
(Presented by The United States)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
This paper presents the United States’ position on the definition and delimitation of outer space.	
Action:	
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14th Air Navigation Conference – Report of the Committee on the Third Agenda Item (AN-Conf/14-WP/213)

1. Introduction

1.1 1.1. As acknowledged by the 14th Air Navigation Conference in the report from the third agenda item¹ space transportation operations and higher airspace operations are distinct. This distinction is not due to the altitude that they operate at, rather it is because of the vehicle type and mission intent that separate these two types of operations because as the Conference also noted that “space vehicles do not meet the definition of “aircraft

2. Discussion

2.1 The U.S. continues to hold the view that there is no need to seek a legal definition or delimitation for outer space². Currently, there is no international consensus on where such a boundary would be and no agreed-upon operational or safety benefits to defining such a boundary with respect to airspace integration.

¹ AN-Conf/14-WP/213

² It is worth noting that some federal states within the United States have adopted or proposed definitions of “outer space” or related concepts for their own purposes, such as regulatory compliance or tax laws. These actions do not relate or, and are not evidence of, the existence of a definition of outer space under international law.

2.2 Given the lack of international consensus, an attempt to define or delimit outer space would be an unnecessary theoretical exercise that could unintentionally complicate existing activities and that may not be able to adapt to future technological developments.

2.3 Some States have suggested the Kármán line, 100 kilometres, as the legal delimitation between airspace and outer space. However, there is no basis in aerodynamics or physical significance of a line at the Kármán line or any other altitude³

3. Conclusion

3.1 The U.S. is opposed to seeking a legal or operational definition for outer space until there is a demonstrated need and practical basis for developing a definition or delimitation.

3.2 The meeting is invited to note this information

— END —

³ Gangle, Tom, “The Non Karman Line: An Urban Legend of the Space Age,” *The Journal of Space Law*, Volume 41, Number 2, 2017, p 151-177.