

Hosted Payload Episode 6: Cindy Grady (Intelsat)

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Jillian Quigley joins host Henry Gola for the Orbital Debrief to talk about new satellite legislation, defending commercial space assets, and a new European venture to deorbit satellites. Then, get on the bandwagon as Cindy Grady of Intelsat comes aboard to share her passion for the 2005 movie *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Transcript

Henry Gola

Welcome to Episode 6 of Hosted Payload, the satellite and space law podcast. From Wiley Rein in Washington, D.C., I'm Henry Gola. Almost 30 years ago, when I was attending Parsippany High School in New Jersey, a lot of folks who were smarter and more well-read than me, loved the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* Books. So, this episode goes out to Jason Goelib and Siddharthan Gugaraj, wherever they may be, as my guest Cindy Grady from superstar satellite company Intelsat, brings her passion for the *Hitchhikers* series and joins me to discuss the 2005 movie. But first, my colleague Jillian Quigley handles the Orbital Debrief to discuss some summer satellite and space news. Jillian how are you doing?

All right, joining me for the Orbital Debrief is my colleague, Jillian Quigley. Jillian, how are you doing?

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Jillian Quigley

I'm doing well today. How are you doing?

Henry Gola

Good. Do you have summer vacation plans? Have you been on vacation already this summer?

Jillian Quigley

I have. I actually was in the Dominican Republic a couple of weeks ago which was very fun. But it's good to be back and getting to do the podcast with you.

Henry Gola

Did you do a resort, or did you travel around?

Jillian Quigley

I did a resort, which was really nice. Yeah.

Henry Gola

All right. Very nice. That's good to sometimes just go somewhere and chill. All right. So, what do we need to know for July?

Jillian Quigley

All right. So, our first item up this month, the House is scheduled to vote on HR 1338 which is the Satellite and Telecommunications Streamlining Act this week. So, the act is going to direct the FCC to, among other things, adopt rules that layout "specific, measurable, and technology neutral performance objectives for space safety and orbital debris." And then it also mandates the FCC to adopt other reforms that will streamline the existing Part 25 licensing procedures for space and earth stations.

Henry Gola

Interesting. We'll see if that gets through both the House and the Senate. That's been percolating for a while over there. So, does Congress have any other reforms teed up in the next few months?

Jillian Quigley

Yeah, so there are several other bills that have been introduced in the House and Senate, including a few amendments to the NDAA, or the National Defense Authorization Act. But the next one that I think we should keep on our radar is going to be S.1425, which is the Satellite Cyber Security Act. And so, what this does, is it directs the Cyber Security and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CSISA, to develop and maintain a commercial status satellite cyber security clearinghouse, which is going to assist operator's cyber readiness and resiliency.

Because that's quickly becoming an area of concern for a lot of regulators.

Henry Gola

Of course. A lot of buzz on the Hill for that. What else is going on in the space and satellite world?

Jillian Quigley

Yes, so second up this month, General James H. Dickinson of U.S. Space Command spoke last week at the Aspen Security Forum and confirmed that usspacecom does not, and will not, provide blanket protection to commercial satellites that host military payloads or contribute to military activities if they're attacked in armed conflict.

Henry Gola

So, this was - it was a headline in the, you know, The Morning Space News email. It seemed a little out of the blue. Has this been an issue before?

Jillian Quigley

So, it has. And this is something that's been discussed extensively in the last few years, especially because there are several satellite operators that either provide support for troops in Ukraine, or host payloads that contribute to the war effort in Ukraine. And so, as a result, we've seen it play out in real life with a cyber-attack on a Viasat satellite early last year. And so it's really quickly becoming a hot button issue.

Henry Gola

So, you know, not to put you on the spot here, but are countries legally allowed then to shoot down commercial satellites?

Jillian Quigley

Yeah, so, experts on the law of armed conflict still disagree about the legality of targeting commercial spacecraft in this way. Specifically, because there's so many nuances in the law of targeting. But General Dickinson's statements were especially interesting because this is one of the first times that the U.S. military has publicly signaled the intent to limit involvement in protection and defense of commercial space assets. So, there are several other ways that the military has tried to mitigate these threats, including extensive sharing of space situational awareness with ah commercial satellite operators. But there's no doubt that this will continue to be an area of concern for satellite and other space operators moving forward.

Henry Gola

Certainly, certainly so. There are so many commercial partnerships from the Department of Defense and, you know, other of our intelligence agencies that this is an interesting statement, an interesting policy position. All right. What is third?

Jillian Quigley

So, third up this month, the European Space Agency is going to attempt a first of its kind experiment that will guide a defunct satellite back to earth. And so, the satellite in question, the Aeolus was launched in 2018 and was used to measure earth's wind on a global scale. And so, although the weather satellite exceeded its life expectancy by a few years, ESA decided to decommission it earlier this year after it ran out of fuel.

Henry Gola

So, why should we care about what the ESA is doing here?

Jillian Quigley

So, when a satellite or other spacecraft is decommissioned, operators normally allow it - the orbit - to decay which means that the satellite is designed to eventually reenter the earth's atmosphere and burn up entirely. Many of the satellites that were constructed before the current orbital debris mitigation rules were put in place, which includes this satellite the Aeolus, weren't designed to allow for controlled reentry and so ESA is attempting what it calls an "assisted reentry," instead of an uncontrolled reentry. Ah, to reduce the risk of the satellite becoming a source of falling debris. And so, what ESA plans to do is use the remaining fuel to steer the Aeolus to the optimal point of reentry and then it'll conduct three sets of orbit-lowering maneuvers and eventually bring the satellite to an altitude of about eighty kilometers, where it will send its final deorbit commands to the satellite.

Henry Gola

So, just to just to clarify here for some of our listeners who may not be, you know, so in the weeds, when you're talking about falling debris, we're not talking about orbital debris in space. We're talking about falling debris on Earth, correct?

Jillian Quigley

That's correct. It's, um, a lot of the time it becomes a concern if there's debris that is falling into airspace and it might hit aircraft, or hit property, or people on the ground. Often it does fall into the ocean.

Henry Gola

Most of the Earth is ocean. So yeah, the odds are good there. All right, so if this succeeds, will other satellite operators be able to use this as a model going forward?

Jillian Quigley

Yes, if this does go according to plan, satellite operators can use similar tactics to deorbit other spacecraft that also lack capabilities for controlled reentry. Which will be very exciting and potentially signal some new, ah, new opportunities to improve space safety for some of the older satellites.

Henry Gola

All right, cool stuff. Jillian, I loved these three things because none of them were about the FCC, so that's a first. Congratulations on that and thanks for joining us this month.

Jillian Quigley

Thank you for letting me come and talk with you.

Henry Gola

All right, welcome back to Hosted Payload. Cindy Grady is Assistant General Counsel for Intelsat, which is the operator of the world's largest integrated satellite and terrestrial network. Cindy, welcome to the podcast.

Cindy Grady

Thank you.

Henry Gola

Glad you're here. And today we're going to be talking about the 2005 movie *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*. I'm going to give a little recap and then we can dive in. So, the movie was adapted from Douglas Adams's franchise of radio comedies and books. Martin Freeman stars as Arthur Dent, one of the last remaining humans after a group of aliens destroy Earth to make way for an intergalactic bypass. Dent is rescued by Ford Prefect, an alien writing the titular book and played by Mos Def. They join up and travel across the universe with fellow human and love interest Trillian, played by Zooey Deschanel and President of the Universe Zaphod Beeblebrox, played by Sam Rockwell.

The movie had generally positive reviews, with several calling it "very British and very funny," another saying it was "bland and tedious." Cindy, in FCC parlance, petition to deny or comments in support of *Hitchhiker's Guide*?

Cindy Grady

Comments in support. I was raised with *Hitchhikers Guide* so I kind of feel like I'm almost obligated to support every reiteration of it that Douglas Adams had a thing to do with. So.

Henry Gola

So, knowing that you've read the books, do you think the movie was faithful to the books? Too faithful? Not faithful enough? Did it capture the books? How would, how would you say the movie did in that respect?

Cindy Grady

So, I think it hit the highlights. I think that it's not supposed to be faithful. I mean Douglas Adams did have a hand in the screenplay, though he died before they went into production on this. But, I mean, this came out of a radio show, I mean to your point in your introduction.

And he's varied it some, every single retelling. I mean like, I think the forward - I actually pulled out my book and granted - I mean like - it's a tome. It was my parents. I've stolen it from my parents. A long time ago I stole it from them. But um, it's five books and he says, you know, like I retell it a little different and I start confusing myself. So, I don't think he ever intended for it to be an exact replica. And none of them are, because there's been TV versions of this. There's been two radio versions of this. It was never meant to be a true telling. The true telling is really "the earth is blown up and you've got every man out in the world and young universe and how do you survive." I mean it's existentialism in space. So, I think it did a good job there. I did not care too much for the playing up of the love interest piece, and I think that's because it was a big budget Hollywood film. But, it didn't kill it. But it was kind of like okay it felt a little forced knowing all the other material. But it wasn't horrid. But it did have, it does suffer from the early not manic pixie girl problem. I look back and I don't remember...I saw it when it came out and I don't remember that much manic pixie. And then looking back almost twenty years later it's like "Yeah, okay. That, definitely was right in that time period and that is that character."

Henry Gola

So. But yeah, you bring up interesting point. So, this movie, going back a little bit, you said you know this movie was in development a long time. It was originally optioned and bought by Ivan Reitman and his crew and he was going to have Dan Akroyd and Bill Murray in the movie. But then Dan Akroyd came to him and said "Let's do ghostbusters." So, they did ghostbusters instead. So, those movies sort of sat in limbo for a long time. What do you think would be a better cast? Those two or Martin Freeman and Mos Def's character as the two main, the two main guys in this film?

Cindy Grady

Mos Def did an amazing job with it, I think. Ford Prefect's always been one of my favorite characters because he's the one writing the guide.

Henry Gola

Right.

Cindy Grady

And he is the mechanism in which, you know nothing and are learning something. He is the teacher for the everyman that is Arthur Dent. And, um, I always kind of liked that payoff, but I kind of just liked how he was odd but relatable enough that you could understand what was going on.

Henry Gola

Right.

Cindy Grady

He did a really good job of just being like "I don't know what's going on, but you're telling me what's going on." So at least...he comes off as a very reliable narrator, too. Both in the books and in the film. Um, and you think that's kind of odd, given he's an alien who you know started off and you find out right at the beginning he has been lying to Arthur Dent the whole time. Yet, he makes this very convincing you know, reliable narrator through the whole piece. Zooey Deschanel, in 2005, I don't think you were going to cast probably anybody else in that. I think, had you allowed it not to be so much the love interest and the tension they tried to play up there and just let her be the other human. It's kind of played up like "you're the last male and female humans in the universe," a little bit too much. Because they really didn't have that in the book. They just kind of existed in the same space and I think that's a much more interesting narrative between two characters, than just playing up "you're a boy and you're a girl" and put you together.

Henry Gola

Yeah, it's interesting. You know it's definitely a movie of its time. But you also say like, you know, each time it comes out it's been sort of adapted a different way as you said. Of course the author, you know, died in 2001. So, if they rebooted it which Hollywood is known to do over and over and over again, I think they would probably go TV show right? like a longer form TV show to sort of play out a few more of the adventures. Do you think they would change the tone or do you think it would still be silly? Or do you think it would take on more of a 2020s Black Mirror-ish, British, tone? Or would it keep more of the Monty Python vibe it had going in this one? Thoughts?

Cindy Grady

I think it's going to keep, it would keep some in the Monty Python. I think that that is necessary by the piece. This is surrealism and existentialism and sarcasm this...you know Douglas Adams was part of that whole group that came in some theater group playhouse kind of thing at Cambridge that Douglas Adams was part of, John Cleese was part of, I mean like Hugh Laurie. Like it came out of that. Stephen Fry. Like it is very much – that is at the core of the material. I don't think you would have *Hitchhikers Guide* if you tried to turn it a little bit too dark.

Henry Gola

Yeah.

Cindy Grady

You'd lose the surrealism as well. I mean like it's, it is surrealism in its most absurd. Whereas Black Mirror is like "can I scare you into being, you know, like..." it just takes a different tack to get to the same place to a certain extent.

Henry Gola

Ah.

Cindy Grady

But I think you would totally lose material if you couldn't have some of the absurdness to it. Like that, that's the whole point. Like the Earth was blown up to put a bypass.

Henry Gola

Right?

Cindy Grady

How do you make that not absurd?

Henry Gola

Right. That's a good point. Speaking of absurd, Sam Rockwell's Zaphod character. How would you describe what he's going for there?

Cindy Grady

Chaotic...neutral. He's just, he is...I go back and forth between feeling like he played it a little too hard, and then kind of going back to the fact that that character really is obnoxious, and it's supposed to be obnoxious. And he hit that right. You know if you're feeling like "God, seriously?" I think you hit it right. And I think that's how the character's supposed to be. And it says a lot. I mean this is under the...the underpinnings of this is bureaucracy and, you know, power, and how do those things and self-realization and how do those things all kind of go together. And that's what you see. And he is that. Okay, so you have lots of power, does it really matter if you're kooky and just off the rails? Well, recent politics in the U.S. kind of says "Probably. Yeah, no, it doesn't really matter." So does this film. Which is...

Henry Gola

Yeah. I read he was going for a combination of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Elvis, and Bill Murray's character in *Kingpin*. Three out of those four have southern accents, which he definitely puts on in this and then ended up redoing a decade later in *Vice* when he played W. I thought he sounded a little bit...I thought I heard Owen Wilson and Matthew McConaughey. That's what I heard watching it now doing the movie. And he kind of looked like, I don't know, Vince Neil from Motley Crue. He had like the 80s rocker vibe going on.

Cindy Grady

It took me a minute to release who it was. I'm like "That face is familiar, but it's not familiar." Um, yeah, so.

Henry Gola

Ah, so yeah, definitely an interesting take there. One casting decision I loved was using the voice of the late great Alan Rickman as Marvin, the depressed robot. He was my favorite character in the movie. What about you?

Cindy Grady

Yeah, I mean my favorite character in the franchise is Ford, but in this movie, yeah, he shined in that. It's interesting because while Alan Rickman did the voice it was um, Warwick Davis that did the character.

Henry Gola

Yeah, from willow. Yes.

Cindy Grady

Shout out to that because he does not get nearly as much credit for the work he does that you don't hear his voice on. It's interesting I was thinking about it with modern times and all the AI stuff that's coming out now. And then looking at this depressed robot and I'm like "yeah if they ever actually become sentient, I could see how a robot would become depressed."

Henry Gola

Right.

Cindy Grady

Actually, "Oh, I can see all this stuff and you guys are still doing it that way. Yeah, I feel you. So, I think he stole, I agree, I think he stole the movie, hands down.

Henry Gola

Yeah, I like that you pointed out that Warwick Davis was in it too, because the body movements are just as funny and well done as the voice, right?

Cindy Grady

It's very sad Panda. It's like the panda, and the body that goes with it, and the slouch, and the "fineeee." You know, it's every, you know, every small child that's been told to clean their room or they can't have ice cream. "Ugh, Fineeee."

Henry Gola

So, we talked about what would change and wouldn't change if they did redo it. Should they redo it? Is this a movie, is this a franchise that's ripe for a new retelling on TV? Probably Disney, I would think.

Cindy Grady

Blah I don't want it on Disney.

Henry Gola

Well, ok, so and if they did redo where would you want to see it?

Cindy Grady

I'd leave it in the BBC. I think if you're going to do it, do it as you the TV format that BBC does. So you have a 12 or a 24 and it's done. I think the problem with particularly American TV is it's really hard to tell a story that has beginning, middle, end. Because you're 22 seasons in now.

Henry Gola

Right.

Cindy Grady

And you're just making up these...and granted Douglas Adam has enough material to do that.

I think they were going to do Dirk Gently, which I was really excited for but it still hasn't come up. So, I kind of would like to see them, maybe, look at some of his other material before doing *Hitchhiker's Guide*. Because all of it has that really tongue in cheek, somewhere under here's a serious message but let me make you laugh so you don't cry about how this reflects on how the world is kind of thing with it. And so, I think there's a lot of other material rather to see them, you know, fund first. But I'd prefer to see it in like the BBC very closed format that somebody's planned out the whole thing first, instead of syndication forever kind of problem that we see.

Henry Gola

All right. Any last words about this movie, anything else you wanted to add that I didn't ask?

Cindy Grady

I mean, I highly recommend anybody who hasn't read the books, you know, to read them. I think they hold up really, really, well. I thought the movie held up really well, like effect-wise and everything else like that.

Henry Gola

Well, right? Because the effects are not supposed to be like cutting edge and state of the art. They're supposed to be a little goofy looking, right? So, I think in that respect.

Cindy Grady

Yeah, but even then, it didn't look like corny goofy. It doesn't look like a B movie. It actually just holds as an artistic choice kind of thing.

Henry Gola

Right.

Cindy Grady

Yeah, I think it is a well-done story and genuinely if you've never been introduced to any of the versions, just pick up one of them. I think it's a, yeah, a nice laugh but with something behind it that.

Henry Gola

Yeah, all right. Cindy thanks so much for joining us today.

Cindy

Thank you.

Henry Gola

Thanks to Cindy, thanks to Jillian, and thanks for listening! For all your space and satellite law needs, look us up at wiley.law.