UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Telecommunications and
Information Administration
Washington, D.C. 20230

November 20, 1996

Mr. Richard Smith
Chief, Office of Engineering and Technology
Federal Communications Commission
2000 M Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Smith:

The Federal Government agencies have a growing requirement for fixed-satellite and mobile-satellite service communications. These requirements, presently and in the future, will include the use of commercial satellite systems. The Congress, in the Communications Satellite Act of 1962, and the NTIA Manual, Section 2.3.3 Government Use of Commercial Telecommunication Service, both require the Government agencies to utilize commercial communication satellite systems unless specified conditions cannot be met (e.g., cost, unique governmental needs, in the national interest). Additionally, in the Fiscal Year 1992 Defense Appropriations Act, Congress directed DoD to study its long term communications needs and to determine to what degree and how the industry believes those needs could be met by commercial systems.

Currently, in the majority of the bands in which commercial satellite services are provided, Government earth stations operations are on an unprotected, non-interference basis. In these bands, NTIA requests that the National Table of Frequency Allocations be modified to allow the Government earth stations to operate on a primary basis.

Presently, the National Table of Frequency Allocations limits use of the fixed-satellite service (FSS) in the bands 3600-4200, 4500-4800, 5850-7075, 10700-13250, 13750-14500, 17300-17800, 27500-30000, and 38600-39500 MHz and of the mobile-satellite service (MSS) in the bands 14000-14500, 19700-20200, and 29500-30000 MHz to non-Government operations. It is noted that in the band 17800-20200 MHz, per footnote US334, Government space stations (for a Government geostationary satellite network to operate on a primary basis, the space station shall be located outside the arc measured from East to West, 70° W to 120° W) and associated earth stations in the fixed-satellite (space-to-Earth) service may be authorized on a primary basis. Operation of Government earth stations with non-Government satellites in the band 17.8-20.2 GHz does not conform to the National Allocation Table. Therefore, with the exception of US334 and stations in the national interest, Federal Government agencies' earth stations operate in these bands on an unprotected, non-interference basis. If there is an interference problem to or from a non-Government earth or terrestrial station from a Government earth station, the Government earth station is subject to immediate shut-down. Therefore, a Government agency could have an earth station which has been in operation for many

years, and if a new non-Government terrestrial system is put into operation in such a way that there was interference to or from the Government earth station, the requirement for solving any interference problems would be the responsibility of the operators of the Government station.

Due to this national allocation situation, Government agencies have been discouraged from using commercial satellite services, despite mandates from Congress and NTIA to use such services to satisfy their communications requirements. Allowing Government earth stations access to these bands on an equal basis with the non-Government users would be advantageous to the Federal agencies as well as the commercial satellite service providers.

In the allocations to the mobile-satellite service for the little and big LEOs as a result of WARC-92, NTIA and FCC agreed to co-equal Government/non-Government earth station use of commercial satellite systems (footnote US319).

To allow Government earth station operations in the FSS and MSS, as appropriate, in bands not currently allocated for Government use, the Federal Government agencies, through the Interdepartment Radio Advisory Committee (IRAC), have requested that the National Table of Frequency Allocations be amended by adding US footnotes similar to US319. The specific bands will need to be determined. Examples of these proposed amendments to the National Table are contained in the Enclosure. Government earth station applicants would be required to comply with appropriate technical and coordination requirements of the FCC rules. These proposed footnotes would not allow operation of Government satellites in these bands.

With a view to determining the best way to proceed on these proposed modifications to the Allocation Table, request our staffs begin discussions. Edward M. Davison will be the NTIA contact point (phone (202)-482-1164; fax (202)-482-2830; email edavison@ntia.doc.gov). Please have the member of your staff who will be the FCC contact point on this issue contact Mr. Davison to begin discussions.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Parlow
Associate Administrator
Office of Spectrum Management

ENCLOSURE

cc: FCC
D. Gips, International Bureau
M. Farquhar, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau
NTIA
W. Gamble
E. Davison
W. Hatch

ENCLOSURE

EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS TO THE ALLOCATION TABLE[1]

ADD appropriate service to Government portion of the Table of Frequency Allocations with proper footnote:

ADD USXXX- In the bands [3600-4200, 4500-4800, 5850-7075, 10700-13250, 13750-14500, 17300-17800, 27500-30000, and 38600-39500] MHz, Government stations operating in the fixed-satellite service shall be limited to earth stations operating with non-Government satellites.

ADD USZZZ- In the band [17800-20200] MHz, with the exception of stations authorized in accordance with US334, Government stations operating in the fixed-satellite service shall be limited to earth stations operating with non-Government satellites.

ADD USYYY- In the bands [19700-20200 and 29500-30000] MHz, Government stations operating in the mobile-satellite service shall be limited to earth stations operating with non-Government satellites.

No change to the Table:

MOD US287--The band [14-14.5] GHz is also allocated to the ~~non-Government~~ land mobile-satellite service (Earth-to-space) on a secondary basis. Authorization of Government stations shall be limited to earth stations operating with non-Government satellites.

[1] specific bands to be determined