

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
THE SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY
ADMINISTRATOR, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
ADMINISTRATOR, NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE
ADMINISTRATION
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY
AFFAIRS

From:

John H. Marburger, III, Director



Subject:

Landsat Data Continuity Strategy

This memorandum is to inform you of the outcome of interagency discussions to ensure the continuity of Landsat-type data observations. For over 30 years, the Landsat series of satellites has gathered multi-spectral images of the Earth's land surface and surrounding coastal regions. Landsat is a national asset, and its data have made -- and continue to make -- important contributions to U.S. economic, environmental, and national security interests. Specifically, Landsat images are the principal source of global, medium resolution, spectral data used by Federal, state, and local government agencies, academia, and the private sector in land use/land cover change research, economic forecasting, disaster recovery and relief, and the scientific study of human impacts on the global environment. Additionally, Landsat data are utilized by over 70 countries and are an important part of a global, integrated Earth observation system.

The future availability of imagery from the existing Landsat satellite constellation remains uncertain. Although Landsats 5 and 7 are currently on orbit, Landsat 5 was launched in 1984 and has far exceeded its expected lifetime, and Landsat 7 has developed a technical problem that limits the utility of the data it produces. In addition, the lack of viable commercial markets for Landsat data led to the cancellation of plans to pursue Landsat data continuity as a public-private

partnership. Any disruption in the continuous availability of Landsat imagery, products and value-added services will adversely affect governmental, international, and other users and may limit use of the global data set for certain types of scientific analysis.

In order to maintain Landsat's legacy of continual, comprehensive coverage of the Earth's surface, the United States Government will transition the Landsat program from a series of independently planned missions to a sustained operational program and establish a long-term plan for the continuity of Landsat data observations. In particular, the Departments of Defense, the Interior, and Commerce and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration have agreed to take the following actions:

- Transition Landsat measurements to an operational environment through incorporation of Landsat-type sensors on the National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS) platform, thus ensuring long-term continuity of these high-priority measurements and providing for integrated collection and availability of data from these two critical remote sensing systems;
- Plan to incorporate a Landsat imager on the first NPOESS spacecraft (known as C-1), currently scheduled for launch in late 2009. The specific implementation plan shall be jointly reviewed and approved by the NPOESS Executive Committee and Landsat Program Management; and
- Further assess options to mitigate the risks to data continuity prior to the first NPOESS-Landsat mission, including a "bridge" mission.

This NPOESS-Landsat operational strategy will need to be justified through the normal budget process. Implementation will be subject to the availability of appropriations, other applicable laws, and Presidential guidance. The cost sharing requirements of the baseline NPOESS program do not apply to the integration of Landsat into NPOESS.

These actions will ensure long-term continuity of these high-priority land, oceanic, and atmospheric measurements and will provide integrated collection and availability of data from these critical remote sensing systems for national and global applications.