

THE WHITE HOUSE**Office of the Press Secretary****May 10, 1994****STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY****Convergence of U.S. Polar-Orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite Systems and Landsat Remote Sensing Strategy**

The Clinton Administration's decision to converge into a single national system the planned polar-orbiting operational environmental satellite programs of the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration was announced today by Vice President Al Gore. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) will also participate in the converged system.

The decision implements a recommendation contained in the National Performance Review (NPR), published last September. The savings to the American taxpayer are estimated to be up to \$300 million during fiscal years 1996-1999. Additional savings are expected after 1999.

Currently, the Departments of Defense and Commerce acquire and operate separate polar-orbiting environmental satellite systems which collect data needed for military and civil weather forecasting. While converging these systems has been a goal of previous Administrations, past efforts have failed to merge them into a single integrated program. Convergence is possible at this time because of clear direction provided by the President and Vice President, and recent technological advances.

In making the announcement, the Vice President said, "For the first time ever, U.S. civil and military environmental satellite programs will be joined. The President's decision will cut costs and eliminate duplication. It takes the nation's space-based environmental monitoring program into the next century. It will satisfy our critical requirements for timely environmental satellite data needed to support civil weather forecasting, global change research and military operations."

The Vice President said, "The decision to converge the satellite environmental system validates the principles that were the foundation of the NPR. Commerce, Defense and NASA have proven that highly motivated and dedicated public servants, empowered to get results, can change for the better the way government serves the people. Building on each other's unique knowledge, the agencies have forged a plan that is a model for interagency cooperation. It epitomizes the spirit and potential of reinventing government."

The President's decision requires the Departments of Defense and Commerce to converge DoD's Defense Meteorological Satellite Program and Commerce's Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite program. This will result in a single national polar-orbiting operational environmental satellite system which will provide data needed to meet U.S. civil and national security requirements, and to fulfill international obligations. NASA's Earth Observing System, and potentially other NASA programs, will provide new remote sensing and spacecraft technologies which could improve the operational capabilities of the converged system.

A single program office will be established to plan for, design, acquire and operate the next generation polar-orbiting weather satellite system. This Integrated Program Office will be staffed by DOD,

Commerce and NASA representatives

As part of the Administration's effort on international cooperation for environmental monitoring, the three agencies will jointly pursue negotiations with the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) on a European-built and operated satellite as part of the converged system

The Vice President also announced the President's decision to continue the Landsat remote sensing satellite program and to restructure Federal agency responsibilities for acquiring and operating the next satellite, Landsat 7. Acquisition responsibilities will transfer from DoD to NASA. The Department of Commerce will operate the satellite and its ground system in cooperation with the Department of the Interior, which will maintain the national archive of Landsat data.

This decision insures the continuity and availability of Landsat-type data. This data serves a broad range of users in the United States and abroad, including the agricultural community, global change researchers, state and local governments, commercial users, and the military.