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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEFENSE, COMMERCE AND NASA PLAN TO COOPERATE ON COMMON POLAR-ORBITING ENVIRONMENTAL SATELLITE PROGRAM

Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology R. Noel Longuemare today announced that the Departments of Defense and Commerce and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration would work together to merge the operational civilian and military polar-orbiting environmental satellite programs into a single, national system.

Currently, the Defense Department operates the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program to collect environmental data critical to the operations of U.S. military forces and other national security users. The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) operates the Polar-Orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite to provide environmental data critical to civil forecasting requirements. In the converged system, both DoD's and NOAA's operational needs will be met by a single system. In addition, NASA is developing the Earth Observing System which will provide new remote sensing and spacecraft technologies that have the potential to expand the capabilities of the converged system.

The agreement announced today responds to a key recommendation of the Vice President's National Performance Review, and represents a significant step forward in the nation's environmental monitoring and weather forecasting program. Under the agreement, an interagency Integrated Program Office will be established to plan, design, field, and operate the next-generation polar-orbiting environmental satellite system, one that will provide assured access to operational environmental data to meet civil and national security requirements.

"This landmark decision to converge two operational satellite systems, one civil and one military, into a single, national system is extremely important to both the civilian and national security communities," stated Longuemare. "We can no longer afford separate satellite systems. We've developed an integrated approach that will meet the needs of both communities in a cost-effective manner."

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In the Integrated Program Office, the Department of Commerce, through NOAA, will have lead agency responsibility for the converged system, and will be lead for satellite operations and for interfacing with the national and international civil user communities. The System Program Director will be provided by NOAA. The Department of Defense will have lead agency responsibility for the converged system's acquisition. DoD will also provide the Deputy System Program Director. NASA will have the lead for facilitating the development and insertion of new technology to enhance the ability of the converged system to meet its operational requirements. The Integrated Program Office is scheduled to be in operation by this fall, at a location to be determined.

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