

Background

In March 1996, we released the Administration's policy on the U.S. Global Positioning System (you may recall the Vice President played a lead role in rolling out the President's decision memorandum, PDD/NSTC-6). This policy was well received by the U.S. GPS industry and user community as well as by GPS users throughout the world. The policy continues to receive good coverage in the trade press whenever GPS issues receive attention.

One of the key elements of the policy was the establishment of an Interagency GPS Executive Board, co-chaired by Defense and Transportation, to manage GPS and its U.S. government augmentations (e.g., the FAA's Wide Area Augmentation System for civil aviation and the USCG's Differential GPS Beacon System for maritime use).

The Board met for the first time in March of last year. The principal issue on the agenda was selection of a frequency for a second civil GPS signal (the addition of a second civil signal has been recommended by a number of expert panels, including the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security, which was chaired by the Vice President). Although industry strongly supported the addition of this enhanced civilian capability, and the government agencies agreed in principle, the technical information needed to identify a frequency band that was acceptable to all the key players was simply not available at the time. The Board postponed a decision on this issue and committed to selecting a frequency for the second civil signal by March 1998.

The Board's third meeting was held on Friday afternoon at the Pentagon. The Board co-chairs (Mort Downey/Deputy Secretary of Transportation and Dr. Jacques Gansler/Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology) reached a decision to place the second civil signal at or near the existing military signal at 1227.6 MHz, and asked for recommendations on the specific signal structure to be made by August. The Board also adopted a recommendation to implement a third civil signal as a component of our overall future strategy for GPS modernization. A frequency for this third signal will also be defined by August.

This decision is a major step forward in implementing the President's GPS policy and shows a strong U.S. commitment to civil GPS users worldwide. It will be viewed very favorably by both the domestic and international GPS industry and user communities and should receive very positive reaction from the press. The addition of a second civil GPS signal will go a long way towards establishing GPS as an international standard, and should help alleviate international concerns over dependence on a U.S. military-controlled system.

The additional decisions to be reached in August (i.e., a specific signal structure for the second civil signal and a frequency for the third civil signal) will also be of significant benefit in our efforts to protect the GPS spectrum in preparation for the 1999 World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC 99 - you may recall your involvement in defeating a European-led proposal at WRC 97 to reallocate the GPS spectrum for shared use with mobile satellite services).

The attached talking points and Q&A are provided for your use as needed.

GPS-IGEB
Global Positioning System
The Interagency Global Positioning System Executive Board

1 Why is the Department of Defense involved in this? Why Department of Transportation?

The Department of Defense developed and fielded the GPS and is responsible for maintaining the dual use system as a world-wide utility with military and civil applications. The Department of Transportation is involved because the Administration established an interagency GPS executive board co-chaired by Defense and Transportation to manage the system and its augmentation.

2. How soon will this new civilian signal be established and in operation?

This newly established GPS civilian signal is expected to go into service around the year 2005

3: Is there an additional cost to this establishment of a new civilian channel? If so, who pays?

Yes, there will be additional costs which will be shared among US government agencies. These costs involve changes to the GPS system – modifications to the satellites and ground control systems, as well as other systems that may be impacted. The IGEB is assessing those costs now.

4: Who makes up the IGEB? Was it just for this event or are there other issues?

The Interagency Global Positioning System Executive Board (IGEB) is made of The Departments of Defense, Transportation, State, Interior, Commerce, Agriculture, Justice, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and NASA. This is a permanent board established by Presidential policy in 1996.

5: How many civilian/military channels are there now?

Currently there is one civil signal and two military signals. The civilian signal is used for maritime, aviation and highway navigation, time synchronization, surveying, and many other applications.

6: Generally, what are the new uses or expanded uses of this new channel going to be?

This new civilian signal will provide enhanced accuracy and redundancy for all civil applications.

7: What's the need for a third frequency in the future if you've just established this new second one?

A third frequency could provide even greater accuracy for high precision applications such as surveying and scientific purposes.