

Prepared Statement of Vice President Al Gore

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Today I am announcing new Presidential guidelines that will bring one of the military's most sophisticated technologies to the lives of families and businesses throughout America.

This new approach to the Pentagon's Global Positioning System will help the emerging GPS business explode into an \$8 billion industry by the end of the century. And it will create some 100,000 new high-tech jobs, the majority of them in California.

We are harnessing power in the sky to chart a prosperous new course on the ground. And we are demonstrating once again that government investments in cutting-edge technologies can yield rich dividends in new products and high-paying jobs.

With a device the size of a calculator, more and more people will be able to use GPS to pinpoint their precise location -- whether they're hiking across the Rockies or sailing across the Chesapeake Bay. Install this technology on the dashboard of a car, and drivers can figure out the quickest route to their destination, avoiding traffic jams along the way.

It's truly amazing. And if the past is prelude, this technology will become more powerful and less costly at lightning speed. Think about how far other technologies have advanced in only a short time. In 1980, for example, only a tiny fraction of television sets were equipped with remote controls. Personal computers were almost non-existent. And fax machines cost a few thousand dollars and took several minutes to transmit a single page.

But in the short space of a decade, all that changed. Products improved. Prices plummeted. New businesses -- and entirely new industries -- emerged. And Americans found new ways to work -- and a host of new jobs that challenged their minds and paid good wages. The same can happen with GPS.

Thanks to this new policy, Americans in the next decade will likely shake their heads in gentle disbelief and ask, "Remember when cars didn't have dashboard navigation systems? How did anybody get anywhere?"

President Clinton's new policy has two key components that I will describe briefly -- and Secretary Pena and Undersecretary Kaminski will elaborate on in a moment.

First, we intend to vastly improve the quality of the GPS signal that civilian users receive. At present, the civilian signal -- unlike the one the military uses -- is good, but not great. That protects our national security, but it means the full capabilities of GPS can't be used for civilian endeavors that require pinpoint accuracy.

But now we are devising new ways to protect the military uses of GPS from hostile parties to ensure our national security interests are maintained. And that means that in four to ten years, we'll be able to make available to consumers, families, and businesses the quality signal once reserved for our armed forces. The same technology that helped our Gulf War troops navigate their way through the Iraqi Desert will help pilots land planes, hikers locate a place to camp, and families find the next rest stop on the highway.

The second component of this new policy is equally important. President Clinton has committed the United States to keeping GPS's constellation of 24 satellites up and running -- and available to scientists, consumers, and businesspeople for free.

The animating spirit is similar to the one that built the Internet. The Pentagon's investment in that global network of computer networks eventually led to a dual-use technology available to all. By spreading the technology far and wide, the federal government sparked an entirely new industry that's now worth billions of dollars and that has created tens of thousands of new jobs.

I am excited by the boundless possibilities of freeing this powerful military technology for civilian and commercial use.