National Space Policy

ISSUE PAPER

SUGGESTED REVISION TO VII. d. (1)

Issue: Should National Space Policy continue to encourage continuity of remote sensing data from commercial United States remote sensing systems?

Present Wording:

> (1) The United States Government will: (a) encourage the development of commercial systems which image the Earth from space, competitive with or superior to foreign-operated civil or commercial systems; [(b) continue to encourage commercial Earth remote sensing and the continuity of data]; (c)...;

NSC Core Working Group Positions:

> DOC and OMB: Remove [(b)..] since it does not represent United States Government policy. It is not current policy to "continue to encourage the continuity of data", irrespective of whether it is from a commercial system or not.
>
> State/DCI: Retain [(b)..] but restate slightly to read: "continue to encourage the continuity of data from United States commercial earth remote sensing systems;". Both national law and policy do in fact support remote sensing data continuity from civil Earth remote sensing systems.

PROS (State/DCI):

> -- Public Law 98-365, Section 102 ("Land Remote-Sensing Commercialization Act of 1984") stipulates "assuring continuous data availability to the Federal Government" from commercial remote sensing systems, such as Landsat;
>
> -- The Department of Commerce "Revised Landsat Commercialization Plan" accepted by the Administration last October 1, and by Congress last October 15, states that "the Administration is committed to the continuation of Landsat as a commercial system," and "The Administration will plan the development of an additional advanced technology civil earth remote sensing satellite" because "This approach provides the best long term prospect for success by continuing the present acquisition of Landsat data..."

-- Moreover, the Intelligence and Defense agencies have made extensive use of civil imagery and remote sensing data from Landsat and have found it valuable if not critical in fulfilling mission responsibilities. It is our understanding that the Intelligence Community plans to make expanded use of such data;

SCIENCE →

-- Civil remote sensing data continuity is a component of U.S. national advanced technology capabilities and competitive growth. An important "value-added" (i.e. data enhancement) industry is developing in this area to exploit and expand U.S. leadership in advanced data processing. Loss of data continuity could erode U.S. leadership if our private commercial firms were forced to rely upon unreliable or inferior foreign data.

CONS (DOC/OMB):

-- Removal of [(b)...] is consistent with current Administration and Congressional policy. No decision of any type will be made for beyond Landsat 6 until after the study by DOC to define the technical, market, and financial options available for a follow-on system to Landsat-6 is completed. This study is called for in the DOC Revised Landsat Commercialization Plan of October 1/15 noted above;

-- It is not technically feasible to encourage continuity of data in the short term because at least a two year gap is expected between Landsat 4/5 and Landsat 6. There is not commitment to ensure continuity in the long term or beyond Landsat 6;

-- The current policy statement on Landsat does not address or make any commitments to continuity of data. Additional Federal resources above current commitments would be required to maintain continuity of data if private resources are not made available. Those additional Federal resources would have to be identified by those agencies supporting a continuity of data, from within their approved budget ceilings.