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Congressional Hearing Testimony for the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force (Space Programs) The Honorable Gary E. Payton

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today to address the state of the National Polar-Orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS). In my role of assisting the Under Secretary of the Air Force in his roles of oversight of National Security Space activities and as the Department of Defense (DoD) Executive Agent for Space, I can confidently say that the Air Force is committed to preserving the space capabilities that our commanders, forces, and the Intelligence Community depend on to conduct their missions. I am pleased that this Committee shares that commitment, and I'm confident that we will be able to work together to provide space-based solutions to our national security needs.

NPOESS STATUS

The NPOESS Integrated Program Office (IPO), made up of DoD, Department of Commerce (DoC), and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) personnel, was formed in December, 1994, in response to the President's direction to converge the DoD and DoC polar satellite systems: the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program (DMSP) and the Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite (POES), respectively. Per the 1995 Memorandum of Agreement that established the agency roles and responsibilities regarding the execution of the NPOESS program, an Executive Committee (EXCOM) was established as the management body that establishes policy guidance, ensures agency staffing, approves the program budget, approves the acquisition program baseline and any changes that occur to that

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baseline. The ability of our agencies to meet the intent of the presidential directive rests heavily on the interagency partnership that exists within the EXCOM structure and its successful management of the NPOESS program.

Since inception in 1994, the program has experienced several setbacks, culminating in the Nunn-McCurdy notification to Congress on 11 January 2006. We notified Congress that the NPOESS cost has grown at least 25%. Per the Nunn-McCurdy statute that governs DoD acquisition programs, when the program director has reasonable cause to believe the cost of the program has grown 25% or greater, then a service secretary must notify Congress of the cost growth and a certification of the program must take place. The OSD office of Acquisition, Technology and Logistics headed by Mr. Ken Krieg is leading an interagency evaluation of the NPOESS program that will evaluate the program against the following four questions. Is NPOESS essential to national security? Is there an alternative that will provide capability equal or greater than NPOESS at less cost? Are the new cost estimates of Program Acquisition Unit Cost (PAUC) and Average Procurement Unit Cost (APUC) reasonable? Is the management structure in place adequate to control PAUC and APUC? Mr. Krieg, in consultation with the NPOESS Executive Committee (EXCOM), will report back to Congress no later than 6 June 06 with the results of the Nunn-McCurdy analysis. As DoD, NOAA and NASA execute this rigorous process we are being extremely thorough in examining how to provide the weather phenomenology of today's low earth polar orbiting satellites and the improved sensing the NPOESS program can offer in the future.

AVOIDING COVERAGE GAPS

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I must emphasize the importance of the POES and Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite (GOES) data to the missions of the Department of Defense and Intelligence Community. The atmospheric sounding and imagery data provided by these systems are critical to the accuracy of the U.S.'s numerical weather prediction models. Polar orbiting platforms provide over 90% of the data used in DoC and DoD prediction models, and building a follow-on program like NPOESS is critical for our nation's weather forecasting capabilities. Any gap in coverage will have strong repercussions; the DoD is dedicated to provide, at a minimum, the current capabilities afforded to us today by the DMSP satellite constellation, albeit these capabilities of yesterday do not fulfill our future needs. As OSD executes the Nunn-McCurdy certification process, the requirements trade space will be thoroughly analyzed to ensure that the current capabilities provided to our operational military users, civil weather forecasters, the Intelligence Community and NASA climate scientist will be carried through to the restructured NPOESS program.

CONCLUSION

It would be hard to overstate the importance of environmental monitoring and weather prediction to the future of DOD and Intelligence Community weather forecasting. The DOD is responsible for weather forecasting for global military operations and the Intelligence Community, even in areas from which data are unavailable, denied, or purposely inaccurate. Presently, DMSP is the only assured source of data to accomplish that mission. It provides data on cloud cover, temperature and water vapor profiles, soil conditions, sea conditions, sea ice coverage, auroral extent, and provides the necessary spatial resolution to support critical military

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operations. It has the capability to register and report dust storms, valley fog, snow cover, smoke and volcanic plumes. Polar-orbiting satellites such as DMSP are critical because geostationary data offers lower spatial resolution and cannot cover latitudes higher than 50 degrees. Our current baseline requires the DMSP capabilities plus the ability to collect high-resolution precipitation measurements. .

I appreciate the continued support of the Congress and this Committee to deliver vital capabilities to our warfighters and to support the Global War on Terrorism. I look forward to working with you as we refine the requirements for our polar-orbiting platforms and ensure that we have the forecasting and remote sensing capabilities we need.