



# Department of Defense

## **DIRECTIVE**

**NUMBER 4120.15**

November 29, 2004

Incorporating Change 2, Effective September 17, 2020

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USD(A&S)

**SUBJECT:** Designating and Naming Military Aerospace Vehicles

**References:** (a) DoD Directive 4120.15, "Designating and Naming Military Aerospace Vehicles," May 2, 1985 (hereby canceled)  
(b) Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Cancellation of DoD Executive Agent Designations," April 8, 2020

### 1. REISSUANCE AND PURPOSE.

This Directive reissues Reference (a), updates policies, and assigns responsibilities to promote clarity and consistency throughout the Department of Defense in referencing military aerospace vehicles.

### 2. APPLICABILITY.

This Directive applies to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments (including their National Guard and Reserve components), the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities in the Department of Defense (hereafter referred to collectively as the "DoD Components").

### 3. POLICY.

It is DoD policy that:

3.1. Each military aerospace vehicle shall be assigned a unique mission-design series (MDS) designator. Only approved MDS designators and popular names shall be used in referencing these aerospace vehicles in official documents and public statements.

3.2. The Secretary of the Air Force will serve as lead agent in order to ensure consistency and uniformity of compliance with this policy.

#### 4. RESPONSIBILITIES.

4.1. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment shall monitor the designation and naming of military aerospace vehicles.

4.2. The Secretary of the Air Force shall:

4.2.1. In coordination with the other DoD Components, publish a joint regulation governing the designating and naming functions for aerospace vehicles.

4.2.2. Assign MDS designators to all military aerospace vehicles, coordinate the assignment of popular names to all aerospace vehicles, and publish and update a list of approved MDS designators and names for aerospace vehicles in a single DoD-wide source document.

4.2.3. Publish the DoD-wide source document annually and update the applicable joint regulation, as required.

4.3. The Heads of the DoD Components shall:

4.3.1. In coordination with the Secretary of the Air Force, assign popular names to their military aerospace vehicles consistent with this Directive and the joint regulation noted in subparagraph 4.2.1. To ensure public suitability of popular names, the Secretary of the Air Force shall obtain the coordination of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs before public announcement of the selected popular name for each aerospace vehicle.

4.3.2. Forward suggested changes to the joint regulation and the DoD-wide source document to the Secretary of the Air Force to facilitate preparation, coordination, and revision, as appropriate.

4.3.3. Disseminate the DoD-wide source document published by the Secretary of the Air Force as a reference for the names and MDS designators of military aerospace vehicles.

4.3.4. Coordinate with the Secretary of the Air Force before referencing, in official documents and public statements, aerospace vehicles in the planning or predevelopment stage that do not have approved MDS designators or names.

5. SUMMARY OF CHANGE 2. The change to this issuance:

- a. Removes the designation of the Secretary of the Air Force as a DoD Executive Agent, in accordance with the April 8, 2020 Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum (Reference (b)).
- b. Updates references and organizational titles for accuracy.

6. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Directive is effective November 29, 2004.



Paul Wolfowitz  
Deputy Secretary of Defense