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RESEARCH AND
ENGINEERING

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3010

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Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: OCT 08 2015

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: National Aerospace Plane Program - INFORMATION MEMORANDUM (C)

(S) In the briefing to you on 31 October we discussed the attributes of the National Aerospace Plane program as they relate to future military, civil and commercial applications. One of the most significant being the possibility of reducing space launch costs an order of magnitude, but just as important, an ability to carry out a number of military related objectives.

(S) Due to the ground swell of enthusiasm that has accompanied the concept of a National Aerospace Plane I believe we may be unintentionally downplaying the technical risk associated with this endeavor. The critical technologies that must be worked to develop this capability all are in the category of high risk. We must carefully assess these high risk technologies before we espouse the fact that we are developing an aerospace plane. The critical technologies include the propulsion system (scramjet), the thermal protection system (high temperature, lightweight materials), and the structures work. While previous work justifies our interest in this concept it has not significantly reduced these risks.

(U) With regard to the past work, there has been a great deal of exposure both at the government and industry level. I believe that it would be impossible to play down the existence of this program, therefore, some official announcement must be made. However, the public discussions on this program should be limited to what we have previously provided in the open, and/or what has been accomplished under Phase 1 of the DARPA effort. I would defer to ASD(PA) for the determination of the appropriate time and level of any announcement. Because of the relationship to civil applications I do believe that NASA should be consulted prior to any announcement.

(S) Consistent with your sensitivities regarding early exposure of this program, the Phase 2 request for proposals (RFPs) will be classified ~~secret~~. There will be no Commerce Business Daily announcement, which should decouple the technical activity program start from any public announcement.

Office of the Secretary of Defense 50 U.S.C. § 552
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS +
Date: ~~08 OCT 305~~ Authority: EO 13526
Declassify: X Deny in Full: _____
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MDR: 13 -M- 4784

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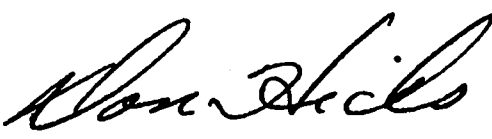
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(S) I have no specific recommendation regarding the public announcement other than I do not believe it to be in our best interests to have the President announce it. Raising this program to that level at the early high risk stage will generate greater scrutiny and interest within the Congress, the public, and the international community.



Donald A. Hicks

Concur 

Non-concur

PA:
Comment: I concur with this approach.
Bob Sims

Prepared by: D. Granato/x59292

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