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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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November 28, 1983

Dear Cap,

As you know, the President will chair a Cabinet Council discussion this Thursday, 1 December, on whether to proceed with the NASA-sponsored Space Station. Bill Casey and I discussed this issue last week, and I promised him a written summary of my thoughts before the CCCT occurred. I want to make sure you also are aware of the same concerns I shared with Bill, and hope to see you at the meeting.

Both Bill and I continue to feel, that on this issue, the interagency process has failed to present the full scope of implications (as well as options) to the President. As currently drafted, the options for the President may be summarized as choices to:

- Commit to a permanently-manned civil Space Station. This option represents itself as sustaining U.S. leadership in space.
- Defer commitment pending additional definition of requirements, costs, and risks. This option represents itself as risking loss of the technical lead and public support of a U.S. manned presence in space.
- Extend Shuttle-Spacelab operations and develop man-tended platforms. This option represents itself as relinquishing permanent manned-presence in space to the Soviets.

At first glance, these options appear to allow the President to be either (1) a visionary American; (2) a procrastinator; or (3) an unimaginative technician. The central issue, however, is not the Space Station, but importance of permanent manned-presence in space. The interagency report tacitly assumes that a permanent manned presence is essential to sustain both U.S. leadership in civil space exploitation, and future national security requirements.

There is, however, a different set of observations on the issue of man-in-space which leads to a somewhat different conclusion. I offer them for your consideration:

- o The Shuttle's first flight occurred on the President's "watch." The President wants to ensure continued U.S. leadership in space--both in perception and in reality. He does feel that defining and initiating a bold next-step in space is needed to sustain that leadership.

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- o There is widespread opinion in the Congress, the interested public, and even among many astronauts that the NASA Space Station is merely bureaucratic. They see it representing rigid retention of a 15-year old approach to the next-step-in space, and necessary to sustain full employment in NASA Development Centers. It is not seen as a "bold step in space."
- o The Soviet's emphasis on achieving permanent manned-presence in space is driven by lack of both reliability and capability in Soviet space hardware. Their desire to be first is driven as well by a need to enhance Soviet prestige, especially after the U.S. lunar mission successes a decade ago.
- o On the other hand, U.S. leadership in space is well established. Our space technology is at least 10 years ahead of the Soviets. To proceed with the NASA Space Station will offer the appearance of the U.S. copying the Soviet efforts. This would serve to reduce the perception of U.S. leadership, and reinforce Soviet prestige as we hasten to catch up..
- o In terms of Space Station utility, the National Academy of Sciences has gone on record that there is "...no science need for this space station during the next 20 years."
- o Neither do materials processing and manufacturing in space offer anything other than marginal prospects for major new markets. Building a terribly expensive factory --- before even identifying the prospective products, manufacturing processes, or markets --- will be difficult to justify. Instead, commercialization can be achieved through encouraging (not simply tolerating) private sector involvement in expendable launch vehicle services, satellite services for communications, and remote sensing. To date, in spite of clear Administration policies to the contrary, privatization efforts have been stifled by concerns over both Shuttle pricing policy and the prospect of a dwindling mission for NASA.
- o In an era of increasing technological and computer capability, many of our most important space-platform functions (e.g., national security objectives) are best served by improving our unmanned platforms --- not by the presence of man.

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- o A positive Presidential decision to proceed with the Strategic Defense Initiative will require a major Presidential commitment to what the Press inevitably will describe as "Space Defense." An additional major Presidential commitment to a Space Station (as planned by some for the State of the Union Address) will only dilute the commitment to pursuit of more stable strategies for national defense.
- o Embarking upon a major new civil space venture, without regaining the national consensus enjoyed in the Apollo years, may jeopardize more than just the civil space program. Public concern over a perception of "militarizing space" could threaten both the effort to enhance survivability of critical space assets, and the President's Strategic Defense Initiative. But a clearly separate, and visionary new step in man's exploration of space would counterbalance the perception of space militarization. The NASA-proposed Space Station is not such a counterbalance option, and lacks the potential to capture public support.
- o The present national climate --- characterized by the change from a focus on trade barriers to a focus on effective competition, new emphasis on education, and renewed reliance upon technology for economic growth --- makes it a propitious time for developing a national consensus for a "bold new step in space." *Technology is understood that has its goals primarily in the world.*
- o There is an emerging consensus among the most respected members of the space community that the appropriate NASA long-term goal is a Manned Lunar Station. The potential returns of this option would be more visible and of much greater long-term significance (and do not necessarily require higher annual investment) than the proposal for a Space Station. A Lunar program is a truly bold step in space, clearly demonstrates U.S. leadership, and is therefore far more likely to produce a national consensus.

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With these observations in mind, I suggest the following set of alternative recommendations as an additional option for discussion with the President. I will also bring it to the President's attention, and attempt to include it in the NSC/OCA-prepared paper for the Cabinet Council.

(Note that Mac Baldrige has already introduced an Option 4, by combining the Options for both Space Station and the extended Shuttle.)

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OSTP Recommendation:

Option 5

- 1) Develop a Manned Lunar Station as NASA's next major long-term goal. Call for a National Space Summit, composed of key bipartisan leaders and thinkers, to recommend the specific options and strategies for such a mission. This will permit establishment of the means to build a new Apollo-like national consensus of support for an enhanced space program. *Vi*
- 2) Extend the on-orbit duration of the Shuttle-Spacelab combination in the nearer term. This would fully exploit the opportunities offered by our present systems. (Extended operation would require commitment to procure a fifth orbiter. The fifth vehicle is necessary to maintain mission-availability of present shuttle-craft.) *fish*
- 3) Assign responsibility for development of a comprehensive space commercialization policy to the Department of Commerce. This responsibility should encompass expendable launch vehicles, space manufacturing, and satellite services. It is still compatible with the DOT's recently assigned responsibility as lead-agency for implementing ELV commercialization. NASA is still available to focus on R&D and conduct of civil space activities. *o*

I have attempted here to identify the key considerations, and address the President's objective to ensure U.S. leadership in civil space exploitation. We should develop clear-cut goals and be up front with our objectives if we are to avoid the "camel's nose under the tent" approach. Such a "camel" approach would no doubt expand in its unplanned future resource requirements, and put other essential national security programs at risk. I anticipate that you share my concerns that the implications of the NASA-proposed Space Station are not fully understood. Because your personal views on these issues are of particular importance, I hope you will be able to attend both the November 30th NSC and the December 1st CCCT meetings.

Very truly yours,

G. A. Keyworth  
Science Advisor to the President

The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger  
Secretary of Defense  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Office of the Secretary of Defense  
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