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VII. Conclusions of the Commission

The members of this Commission have, together, identified five matters of key importance that we believe need attention quickly from the top levels of the U.S. Government. We have drawn these conclusions from six months of assessing U.S. national security space activities, including 32 days of meetings with 77 present and former senior officials and knowledgeable private sector representatives. These five matters—our unanimous conclusions—are:

First, the present extent of U.S. dependence on space, the rapid pace at which this dependence is increasing and the vulnerabilities it creates, all demand that U.S. national security space interests be recognized as a top national security priority. The only way they will receive this priority is through specific guidance and direction from the very highest government levels. Only the President has the authority, first, to set forth the national space policy, and then to provide the guidance and direction to senior officials, that together are needed to ensure that the United States remains the world’s leading space-faring nation. Only Presidential leadership can ensure the cooperation needed from all space sectors—commercial, civil, defense and intelligence.

Second, the U.S. Government—in particular, the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community—is not yet arranged or focused to meet the national security space needs of the 21st century. Our growing dependence on space, our vulnerabilities in space and the burgeoning opportunities from space are simply not reflected in the present institutional arrangements. After examining a variety of organizational approaches, the Commission concluded that a number of disparate space activities should promptly be merged, chains of command adjusted, lines of communication opened and policies modified to achieve greater responsibility and accountability. Only then can the necessary trade-offs be made, the appropriate priorities be established and the opportunities for improving U.S. military and intelligence capabilities be realized. Only with senior-level leadership, when properly managed and with the right priorities, will U.S. space programs both deserve and attract the funding that is required.

Third, U.S. national security space programs are vital to peace and stability, and the two officials primarily responsible and accountable for those programs are the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence. Their relationship is critical to the development and deployment of the space capabilities needed to support the President in war, in crisis and also in peace. They must work closely and effectively together, in partnership, both to set and maintain the course for national security space programs and to resolve the differences that arise between their respective bureaucracies. Only if they do so will the armed forces, the Intelligence Community and the National Command Authorities have the information they need to pursue our deterrence and defense objectives successfully in this complex, changing and still dangerous world.

Fourth, we know from history that every medium—air, land and sea—has seen conflict. Reality indicates that space will be no different. Given this virtual certainty, the U.S. must develop the means both to deter and to defend against hostile acts in and from space. This will require superior space capabilities. Thus far, the broad outline of U.S. national space policy is sound, but the U.S. has not yet taken the steps necessary to develop the needed capabilities and to maintain and ensure continuing superiority.

Finally, investment in science and technology resources—not just facilities, but people—is essential if the U.S. is to remain the world's leading space-faring nation. The U.S. Government needs to play an active, deliberate role in expanding and deepening the pool of military and civilian talent in science, engineering and systems operations that the nation will need. The government also needs to sustain its investment in enabling and breakthrough technologies in order to maintain its leadership in space.