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SHUTDOWN OF U.S. LANDSAT SYSTEM HALTED

Funding To Be Continued During Space Council Policy Review

Lanham, Maryland, 15 March 1989 - Today the U.S. Department of Commerce rescinded its March 1 shutdown order and reinstated operations of the Landsat 4 and 5 Earth remote sensing satellites. Coordination earlier this week by Vice President Dan Quayle and the new National Space Council helped to expedite a pledge of funds until a policy review of Landsat could be completed. The amount and duration of funding for the satellites has yet to be announced.

Earth Observation Satellite Company (EOSAT), the operator of the Landsat system under NOAA, has resumed data orders and is quickly alerting a worldwide Landsat user community of the news. "Thousands of Landsat data users have been alarmed by the possibility of losing this resource - we are thrilled to tell them that this critical international program will continue," said C.P. Williams, EOSAT President. "We feel that the hard work and close coordination by the Congress and the new Administration were key in resolving this problem," he said.

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In testimony March 7 before the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, Thomas N. Pyke, Jr., NOAA Assistant Administrator for Satellite and Information Services, presented the position of the new Administration: "The President remains committed to the coordination of a comprehensive national space policy, through the establishment of a National Space Council, to be chaired by the Vice President. To that end, the Administration is conducting a policy review of Landsat and, until that review is completed, is committed to operating the Landsat 4 and 5 satellites."

The policy review by the National Space Council is expected to outline whether a need exists for Landsat 4/5, a funding package for Landsat 4/5 operations through fiscal 1990 and 1991, and U.S. government agency responsibility and participation in the Landsat program.

The transition of the Landsat program from public to private operation began in 1985, and is under the oversight of the Secretary of Commerce until 1994 in accordance with Public Law 98-365 (The Land Remote Sensing Commercialization Act of 1984). Since assuming operations of Landsats 4 and 5, EOSAT has reduced operations cost by fifty percent, and has established an international marketing effort to create a remote sensing market for the 1990s when it assumes fiscal responsibility for Landsat.

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