

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
MR. A. THOMAS YOUNG**

**OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE
CONTINUING INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE NATIONAL POLAR-
ORBITING OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SATELLITE PROGRAM**

**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT OF THE
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

JUNE 17, 2009

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Broun, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Tom Young and I chair the NPOESS Independent Review Team (IRT) that was established by the NPOESS Executive Committee (EXCOM) to review the NPOESS program baseline and the management approach.

After numerous meetings, interviews with Air Force (AF), Department of Defense (DoD), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) principals, visits to the primary contractors Northrop Grumman and Raytheon, and discussions with contractor Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), the IRT identified ten findings and recommended corrective actions.

- 1) The current NPOESS program has an extraordinary low probability of success. Implementation of the following recommendations is necessary to address this finding.
- 2) Continuity of data, which each user organization identifies as number one priority, is at significant risk. The program is hardware poor with little protection against a launch failure or early spacecraft failure. Data outages in a particular orbit can be measured in years with a failure. Corrective action is limited to moving C3 and C4 closer to C1 and C2, launching on need rather than schedule and exploiting NPOESS preparatory Project (NPP) data.
- 3) NPOESS is being managed with cost as the most important parameter and not mission success. This Program cost focused culture needs to change to a mission success focused culture and the NPOESS contract award fee criteria needs a similar change in focus.
- 4) NPOESS EXCOM is ineffective. Members must have decision authority. Focus of EXCOM should be top level issues and timely decisions.

- 5) NPOESS Program is not part of a space acquisition organization which makes program implementation extremely difficult. NPOESS must be assigned to a space acquisition organization such as Space and Missiles Systems Center (SMC) or NASA.
- 6) Fiscal year funding shortfalls are causing decisions to be made that are adding risk and increasing cost. Funding shortfalls must be corrected.
- 7) The highest probability of success is to maintain the current contractor team, Northrop Grumman and Raytheon and the IRT recommends this action.
- 8) Due to potential for coverage gaps, NPP has become a critical asset and it is recommended that this be recognized and incorporated in program planning.
- 9) Priorities of NOAA and DoD/AF are not aligned. DoD/AF stated that legacy performance is acceptable and that they are unwilling to provide additional funding to achieve above legacy capability. NOAA stated that current weather forecasting utilizes legacy and NASA Research and Development (R&D) satellite data. Accepting legacy capabilities would be a significant step back. This difference in priorities must be resolved.
- 10) The current budget is inadequate with a shortfall in excess of \$1 billion. Funding the program by fiscal year and through completion to 80% cost confidence including a management reserve of approximately 25% is required to have an executable program budgeted at the most likely cost.

The IRT recognizes that NPOESS is a national program with quality of life, economic, disaster planning, and national security implications

While the IRT believes the cited recommendations must be implemented, additional actions are necessary to have a successful NPOESS program.

The critical issue is the lack of alignment of DoD/AF and NOAA priorities. The IRT believes that the EXCOM will be unable to resolve this difference and the White House will be required to define the NPOESS program that is in the national interest.

Following the NPOESS program decision the responsibility for program implementation must be assigned to one organization, AF with SMC having implementation responsibility or NOAA with NASA having implementation responsibility. Either can do the job.

The IRT believes that the managing organization must have total acquisition responsibility, be allocated all currently planned and programmed budget and be responsible for funding the defined program at an 80% confidence level.

The IRT recommends that responsibility for NPOESS be assigned to NOAA with NASA acting as NOAA's acquisition organization. This recommendation is based upon recognition that

NOAA has a broader responsibility for weather and climate requirements than any other organization and is a natural national advocate for this program.

Under this construct NOAA/NASA will provide NPOESS data to DoD/AF and establish a process to meet future DoD/AF needs.

The EXCOM concept should continue to assure effective program implementation.

Implementation of the IRT recommendations and additional actions is urgently required. Risk and unnecessary cost are being realized at an unacceptable rate.
