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November 13, 1981

NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION  
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 8

SPACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Recognizing the importance of space programs in the broad commercial, civil, and national security needs, the United States is committed to a vigorous effort that will ensure leadership in these areas. The Space Transportation System (STS) is a vital element in fulfilling these needs. ~~(U)~~

This decision establishes national policy that shall guide the activities related to the STS. The United States will continue to develop the STS through the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in cooperation with the Department of Defense to service all authorized space users. The STS will be the primary space launch system for both United States military and civil government missions. The transition to the Shuttle should occur as expeditiously as practical. ~~(U)~~

The STS is a national program requiring sustained commitments by all departments and agencies. NASA will assure the Shuttle's utility to the civil government and non-government users. In coordination with NASA, the Department of Defense will assure the Shuttle's utility to defense and integrate national security missions into the Shuttle system. Launch priority will be provided to national security missions, and such missions may use the Shuttle orbiters as dedicated mission vehicles. Major changes to STS program capabilities will require my approval. ~~(S)~~

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