

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration  
**Office of the Administrator**  
Washington, DC 20546-0001



Dr. Bradford W. Parkinson  
Chair  
NASA Advisory Council  
Washington, DC 20546

APR 10 2000

Dear Dr. Parkinson:

Thank you for your report on the NASA Advisory Council meeting of December 14-15, 1999, which was held at NASA Headquarters. I am pleased the Council had a comprehensive and productive meeting. I enjoyed our discussions concerning the major issues facing the Agency, including workforce and future space transportation. Without a doubt, the workforce issues that face the Agency and the aerospace industry cannot be solved overnight and require long-term strategies. I hope to continue this dialog at your next meeting.

I want to thank the Council for its steadfast efforts at reviewing our FY 1999 Performance Plan. I realize the Council had only limited input into the FY 1999 plan, but your insights and comments will greatly enhance our final report to the Office of Management and Budget and the Congress. Your thoughts and comments on many of our goals and objectives are well-founded, and your concerns are noted. I have asked the NASA Comptroller to formulate a process whereby the Council's inputs into future plans will be better incorporated. We will present this process to you at your June meeting.

I also want to express my sincere gratitude to the Council for its efforts in pushing the Agency in the areas of future space transportation and in Probability Risk Assessments (PRA) for the International Space Station (ISS). Both of these vitally important items greatly benefited from your feedback and advocacy. A well-formulated PRA can only enhance our ability to safely deploy the ISS.

I have enclosed our official feedback to your two formal recommendations in the Enclosure. As always, I appreciate the time and dedication you and the Council members give to our programs and policies. The Council's efforts not only provide valuable assistance to NASA but benefit the Nation as a whole.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel S. Goldin".

Daniel S. Goldin  
Administrator

Enclosure

**NAC Recommendations from December 14-15, 1999 meeting**

**NAC Recommendation: Enhanced Astronaut Medical Transport**

The Life and Microgravity Science Application Advisory Committee has recommended that NASA acquire enhanced medical transport capability (dedicated aircraft) for ISS in order to increase crew safety. Real and potential risks have been identified during the Shuttle/Mir Phase I Program. The aircraft would assure crew health during preflight transport to International Partners' facilities, provide rapid deployment of NASA medical personnel should intensive medical support be required in the immediate postflight period, and facilitate obtaining early postflight biomedical data during crew readaptation. The NAC endorses the requirement to have this capability.

**NASA Response**

The ISS has a long-term requirement to transport astronaut crews between Ellington Field, Texas, and Moscow, Russia. This requirement is threefold: 1) Provide emergency evacuation in the event of a medical emergency; 2) Maintain the health and well being of the crew during preflight and postflight activity (in conjunction with the Health Stabilization program), and to transport "deconditioned" astronauts and crew members following long-duration flights, along with associated medical support equipment and personnel; 3) Minimize security risks to astronauts during international travel.

ISS crews are currently traveling to and from Moscow via commercial air carriers. This practice will continue until a dedicated mode of air transportation is selected. The Office of Space Flight received a detailed requirement description from Johnson Space Center in early November 1999. Following a preliminary review at Headquarters, we forwarded the requirements to the Space Station Program Office, requesting them to submit the requirements to the Joint Program Requirements Control Board for disposition. We also requested both Programs to coordinate the requirements with the Department of Defense Manned Space Flight Support Office. We are currently waiting for the reply. Any acquisition of a new dedicated aircraft will also have to be approved by NASA Headquarters Aircraft Management Office and fully staffed at Headquarters Offices.

Our intention is to honor the requirements after they have been validated. We will consider both commercial and governmental aircraft to meet their needs, and we will do so at the lowest practicable cost to NASA. Above all else, safety and security of the ISS crews will remain our first priority.

**NAC Recommendation: Performance Measurement**

While the FY 1999 Performance Plan and process are commendable and are an excellent first step, the process needs further improvement. For example, all goals do not have the same degree of difficulty and some weight of significance and magnitude of the effort is desirable.

The NAC has not been generally involved in setting the performance goals. For future evaluations, such involvement is important to achieve total balance.

Certain significant NASA efforts are not included in the Performance Measurements. Examples are as follows:

- Developing and executing a comprehensive launch vehicle strategy (a critical NASA need)
- Developing a CRV for manned flight (this should be initiated immediately)
- Air Traffic Control Advances (help for the ATC problems)
- Shuttle Launch Rate and Safety (critical for assembly of Space Station and ongoing essential human flight research)
- New Rocket engine technology (the lynch pin for any future launch vehicle strategy)

These should be included in the FY 2000 Performance Plan.

### **NASA Response**

NASA is very interested and committed to having additional input by the Council into the annual Performance Plans. However, due to the long 18-month lead time, an appropriate process must be established to provide earlier Council guidance. To achieve this upfront input, the NASA Comptroller will work over the next several months to formulate a process by which this may occur. The Comptroller will present this proposed process at an upcoming Council meeting.

Unfortunately, it is too late to accommodate the Council's programmatic areas of concern into the FY 2000 Performance Plan. However, all efforts will be made to address these areas of concern in the FY 2001 Plan.

The Council also observed that not all goals are equally difficult and recommended that a weighting system would be desirable. NASA will explore this idea and report to the Council at an upcoming meeting.