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 THE WHITE HOUSE  
 WASHINGTON

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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. ~~TOP SECRET~~

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. ~~TOP SECRET~~

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. ~~TOP SECRET~~

Declassified/Released on 6/14/90  
 under provisions of E.O. 12356  
 by S. Tilley, National Security Council  
 (F87-495)

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The United States recognizes the importance of its space programs in meeting a broad range of commercial, civil, and national security needs, and is committed to a vigorous effort that will ensure leadership in these areas.

The Space Transportation System is a vital element in meeting these needs, and is a national program requiring sustained commitments by all departments and agencies.

The United States will:

- o continue to develop the Space Transportation System through the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in cooperation with the Department of Defense to service all authorized space users.

- o utilize the Space Transportation System as the primary space launch system for military and civil government missions.

- o transition to the Shuttle as expeditiously as practical.

In accomplishing these objectives the National Aeronautics and Space Administration will assure the Shuttle's utility to the civil government and non-government users, while the Department of Defense will assure its utility to national security missions.

Major changes to the Space Transportation System's capabilities would require Presidential approval.

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