

Task force urges larger civil role in GPS

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IN WASHINGTON DC

The joint US civil/military task force, created to review the management of the global-positioning system (GPS), is recommending that the system should remain in the hands of the Pentagon, but that the Department of Transportation (DoT) should play a stronger role.

The group studied how military and civilian users could exploit GPS, consistent with national-security needs. Its review was also seen as giving an opportunity to end a simmering intra-governmental feud between the DoT and the Department of Defense (DoD). The DoT has questioned the

prospects for international acceptance of a navigation system on which the Pentagon can reduce the accuracy, or shut down, when it wishes.

To ensure that civilian needs are fully considered in policy decisions, the task force recommends that the DoD and DoT form a joint executive board to resolve any differences between civil and military interests.

Transportation secretary Federico Peña says: "Because our agreement with the Department of Defense protects the interests of civil users, while also recognising the continuing national-security uses of GPS, private industry can now make the investments needed to take fuller advantage of GPS."

The panel also advocates that

the DoT designate an assistant secretary of transportation to chair a DoT executive committee and to speak and make decisions on GPS services on behalf of civil users.

It also recommends that any civil enhancements developed by federal agencies should be financed by civilian agencies through appropriations and indirect fees. It recommends against charging direct user fees, but says that the DoD/DoT should study cost-recovery methods to finance GPS services for civil users.

The task force also considered the thorny issue of GPS-accuracy improvements — including differential GPS applications — which, in the wrong hands, could threaten US military forces.

The joint body recommends a study on all such planned enhancements to help officials determine how best to provide

GPS services to all civil users.

"This assessment will investigate the performance, economic and safety benefits and security implications of all wide/local-differential GPS-service options," says the task force report, adding that it should be completed by 30 September, 1994.

It goes on to say that, pending completion of the study, federal research and development on GPS accuracy enhancements should continue. "The task force's opinion is that near-term benefits outweigh any costs that may be saved by delaying or deferring GPS-accuracy-enhancement development," it says.

The task force says that continuing DoD/DoT technical assessments of potential GPS "spoofing" and jamming threats should be completed, with the results provided for further consideration. □

Security at US airports slammed

US domestic-airport security is under heavy fire, after an investigation by the Department of Transportation Inspector General (IG) exposed widespread weaknesses.

Security measures at one airport failed to detect a deactivated hand grenade, smuggled through a passenger-screening checkpoint, and several other systems were breached by inspectors. The IG's report says that "...X-ray and metal-detector equipment currently in use had limited capability in detecting certain explosive devices or components for such devices".

It goes on to criticise the US Federal Aviation Administration generally, for failing to provide adequate security against sabotage.

The de-activated hand grenade passed undetected through a metal-detector portal because "hand-wand" screening was poorly conducted, the report says.

Attempts at illegal penetration of secured areas were made at four unnamed US airports by staff who succeeded in 15 of 20 attempts. The IG says that there were few challenges by airport

workers and that other investigators without proper identification also went unchallenged.

Once secure airport areas were penetrated, "...we wandered around aircraft-parking areas, baggage-processing centres, maintenance areas and ramp administrative offices", the report states, even though those conducting the test engaged in behavior intended to elicit challenges.

The IG's report concludes that FAA inspection and testing of airport security "...is not aggressive and enforcement actions are limited".

The FAA agrees that there is a lack of adequate security in place and the IG notes that "...the FAA stated that the problem probably exists throughout the domestic-airport system".

The agency is conducting an extensive research-and-development programme on security systems, but has previously complained that the ponderous US acquisition system, and particularly the propensity of competing contractors to protest at each other's contract awards, has delayed the pace of operational trials and purchases. □

Bombardier delays larger Dash 8

Bombardier is delaying from early 1994 until the end of the year any decision on the launch of the 70-seat de Havilland Dash 8-400 stretched high-speed regional turboprop and the stretched, 70-seat, Canadair Regional Jet.

The delay was revealed by Bombardier chairman Laurent Beaudoin, as the Canadian company formally launched the C\$800 million (\$600 million) development of its Global Express long-range business jet.

Beaudoin says that Bombardier is delaying launch deci-

sions on both projects, to gain more time to determine market demand. "Too many [regional] aircraft exist, or are planned, and rationalisation is inevitable," he says. The company has already said that only one of the two airliner programmes would be launched at one time.

Its announcement comes after Pratt & Whitney Canada revealed that it is suspending activities on its proposed PW305-derived turboprop, which would be targeted at the Dash 8-400 class of aircraft. □
See General Aviation, P16.

Dash 8 family expansion put on hold along with stretched Regional Jet

