



By Gerry Oberst

## European Space Policy Document Lacks Rigor

**Europe took a closer step toward** creating a common space policy in December when it adopted amendments in the Treaty of Lisbon to permit the European Union to participate in the space field. The European Parliament also took a small step in the same direction in mid-February when its subcommittee on Security and Defence held a “Workshop on Space Policy and European Security and Defense Policy.”

Most of the materials at the workshop were dated, consisting of past resolutions and older studies, but a piece of recent evidence was a report, “The Cost of Non Europe in the field of satellite based systems,” finalized in mid 2007 and published in December. The awkward title refers to costs of the current national approach towards space policy in Europe as opposed to operating under a centralized European Union system.

This unclear wording is symptomatic of a general problem with the report, however, which desperately needs technical editing. One struggles at times to figure out what the 75-page report is trying to say.

The report focuses mainly on non-commercial operation of Earth observation and telecommunications satellite resources used by European nations. It is just as well that the report avoided discussion of commercial systems, as it misspells references to “Dymler Chrysler” and “Iridium,” and asserts that the latter was built by Motorola and bought by the U.S. Department of Defense. These whoppers do not uniquely discriminate against non-European companies. The report also misspells the name of major French company Legardère.

More basic errors mar the report. It states the “European Constitutional Treaty” opened the possibility for cooperation in defense, overlooking that the treaty was rejected by European voters in 2005. The text claims that French budgets amount to 50 percent of European military space programs. Whether or not this unsupported claim is correct, it is solidly contradicted in the annexes, showing French support to about one-third of European military space funding. The glossary omits almost a third of the acronyms in the report. There is at

least one substantial miscalculation of the percentage decrease that could be obtained in satellite programs.

Struggling through the report reveals it is not completely ready for

prime time. Nevertheless, does it set out correct assumptions and prescriptions for European satellite programs?

The report recognizes that space-based systems provide “unique capabilities” throughout the “information chain.” For this reason, the European Union and member states want access to the full range of capabilities that satellites can provide for security and defense needs. This term “security” is broader than purely military and includes applications for observation and data collection, telecommunications and navigation outside the military context.

All these applications come at a cost. The report discusses current plans for national communications and observation satellites, predicting that these plans lead to peaks by 2012 but significant degradation afterwards. It also says that estimates of a credible European military space effort would increase the annual budget from 1 billion euros to 2 billion euros (\$1.52 billion to \$3.04 billion) from 2012. Forecasting from current trends, the report argues that national budgets will not support this effort. The authors say the alternatives are either creating a common effort today or “being left without any significant space capability by 2022.”

Frankly, the report does not prove this assertion. It establishes that currently announced programs do not define follow-on or replacement satellites, not that those national efforts will grind to a halt. Moreover, the report does not support a solution through common efforts to save sufficient funds. For instance, it notes that European Earth observation satellite programs are not “the most promising area for cooperative cost-reduction schemes.” For telecommunications, the report claims more savings could be made in future programs “up to several millions Euros” — which in context is not particularly big money.

Nevertheless, the report reflects a strong feeling among at least the space-faring countries in Europe that a common approach would strengthen Europe’s activities in space.

The conclusion of the report is that the European Parliament should favor a future European architecture for the defense and security “ambitions of the European Union.” It also urges the Parliament to support a European space security policy.

The report provides many good background descriptions of current programs, but its lack of rigor is not a sturdy platform for arguing in favor of multi-billion public expenditures. ▽

*Gerry Oberst is a partner in the Hogan & Hartson Brussels office.*