

Gaiashield Group

01/31/11

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: National Planetary Defense Agency



President Obama: Sir,

On October 15, 2010 the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy sent letters* to the chairmen and ranking members of both the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology in response to Title VIII Sec. 804 of the 2008 Space Act. Specifically:

ESTABLISHMENT OF POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THREATS POSED BY NEAR-EARTH OBJECTS.
Within 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the OSTP shall--

(1) develop a policy for notifying Federal agencies and relevant emergency response institutions of an impending near-Earth object threat, if near-term public safety is at risk; and (2) recommend a Federal agency or agencies to be responsible for-- (A) protecting the United States from a near-Earth object that is expected to collide with Earth; and (B) implementing a deflection campaign, in consultation with international bodies, should one be necessary.

Both, ostensibly veiled mandates for the recommendation of the Nation's Commander in Chief. Even Congress knows the Director of OSTP does not make such strategic level National Security decisions. And as we can see, he in fact, did not.

As to item (1): although there is no evidence that any such policy has been implemented and that the agencies that would be involved been informed of such a disaster contingency, the Director did conform to the letter of the request and define the protocols that would be employed in the event of a survivable impact event. So at least, in the office of the OSTP, there is a plan.

As to item (2): The Director's sole recommendation here is for NASA to conduct a comparative scientific study and analysis of the tactics available to deflect these objects to indicate the best Agency by determining the most effective tactic. Which would be relevant, and why NASA, through its Program Analysis and Evaluation Office, did a rigorous and diligent study of this element of the issue in 2006**. The conclusion then was that thermonuclear explosive devices are more effective than any other alternative by a factor of 100 times. And that margin has been increased dramatically through subsequent research. Is it possible that the Director does not know about this work or is it that he just does not like the answer and wants NASA to do it again hoping for a different outcome despite any relevant amendment in the Laws of Physics? Perhaps, in this administration, Science has become a rug under which we sweep our fearful things?

To be fair, the request of 2008 was reiterated in the 2010 Space Act so the Director, potentially, has another chance to conform to the spirit of this request by October 2012. However, by the end of 2012 it should be noted that the next asteroid on its way to strike Earth will have closed 700 million miles closer to impact... and no government in the world is even close to being prepared.

However, to the greater point, there are, in fact, only two candidates here: NASA and DoD... and regardless of what the best tactic to be employed might be, which one would we ever consider engaging this threat without, and call it wise? The only question should be which one would be strategically responsible and in command... and *that* is where the application of thermonuclear explosive devices becomes a determining factor, along with many other considerations.

At random: without any recursive pattern in either their occasion or magnitude, over the course of the next billion years of the life of Earth, given the number, dynamics and distribution of asteroids in our solar system, our rational and deterministic understanding of the geometry and dynamics of our Solar System dictates that, we will either deal with or suffer the consequences of 10 to 20 million asteroid impact events. Luckily, most will be in the 10 meter range and relatively harmless high altitude airbursts. But 1 to 2 hundred thousand will be 100 meter major city killers, and 1 to 2 thousand will be 1,000 meter human civilization killers, and 10 to 20 will be 10,000 meter Chicxulub class extinction level impact events. All these rocks are out there, in orbit around the Sun and on course to strike Earth: effectively impact events in progress, *now*. Clearly, the very definition of a credible imminent and existential threat and clear and present danger. The only relevant question is, which one is the next asteroid on its way to strike Earth?

Since, from here and now, we do not know which asteroid is the next asteroid on its way to strike earth we do not know when it will strike or how large it will be. Worse, strategically speaking, we do not know when we will know which, when and how large. If the detection-to-impact window is small and the asteroid is large, or both, we will likely fail. We can not wait until we see it coming before we act and hold any reasonable expectation for success. Therefore, we must act before we see it coming. And before we see it coming begins... *Now!*

After 50 years of study, perhaps science time is over. Science has shown us all it can about this threat and it is time for the engineers. Engineers of technology and method. Time to build something... and that means Funding. Which requires a Strategy to guide the expenditure, which requires an Agency to craft and implement the Strategy, which requires a codified Policy. A clear and determined expression of political will from the Executive Office to effectively deal with this dire Cosmic Promise to randomly bring We The Species to an abrupt end.

Because we can, and because it includes the random prospect for our extinction, knowing which large asteroid is The Next Large Asteroid on its way to strike Earth will always be the most important thing Mankind can ever know and deflecting The Next Large Asteroid on its way to strike Earth will always be the most important thing Mankind can ever do...

The Universe is a dangerous place and does not suffer dilettantes... or cowards, gladly.

At your disposal and convenience in this issue,

A Million Miles A Day,

R. Dale Brownfield
Gaiashield Group
<<http://Gaiashield/.Com>>

Enclosure: Comments on OSTP letter to Congress: <<http://gaiashield/.com/OSTPNEO>>

*October 15, 2010 - OSTP Response to Congress on Near-Earth Objects
<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ostp/library/docsreports>>

**Near-Earth Object Survey and Deflection Study: Final Report,
http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/FOIA/NEO_Analysis_Doc.pdf

cc:

Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV
Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison
Sen. Carl Levin

Sen. John McCain
Rep. Ralph M. Hall
Rep. Eddie B. Johnson

Rep. Howard P. McKeon
Rep. Adam Smith
Rep. Dana Rohrabacher

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