

GaiaShield Group

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President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re Apophis: An Asteroid Impact Event in Progress

President Bush: Sir,

In a recent publication of the B612 Foundation: "A Call for (Considered) Action", it was offered that the recently detected categorically small 320 meter asteroid Apophis may be on course to strike Earth in 30 years. This impact event threatens the West Coast of the United States and the existence of several of its major cities. The current projected path of possible impact points not only include the territory and interests of the United States but that of Russia, Japan, Mexico, Central America and several nations in South America including French Guyana where Europe keeps its space program launch facilities. Of course the United States will certainly be looked to for leadership in dealing with this event, which in matters of national and now truly global security will be manifest in its Executive Office. So in reply to a letter from the B612 Foundation soliciting their analysis on this issue, how have mid level functionaries at NASA come to be making crucial strategic decisions and commitments regarding our nation's safety and security and constructively effecting international policy? Did NASA forward their appreciation of this threat to your office for any executive perspective and/or sanction before taking charge of saving the world here?

On their own NASA has little choice but to view this from the biased perspective of a 40-year-old culture steeped in the mandate of science for science's sake and discovery to suit the dreams and aspirations of mankind... In 40 years NASA has never had to protect anyone from anything or face the prospect of dire negative consequences if a mission failed. So in this, to justify a mission for any strategic reason is understandably completely foreign. As a result they are actively soliciting ideas for making such a mission also scientific. Only then they can they justify the cost.

The cost being the principal obstacle to a \$300 million reconnaissance mission, from NASA's conditioned perspective, is weighed against their own annual budget and relative to their lost opportunity. Not as the broad reality of the target area would define, a cost relative to over half the world's \$40 trillion gross product (or at least that portion dedicated to safe and secure their respective national interests). As such, and amortized over the 6 years of the mission, the \$50 million annual cost becomes not just affordable, not just negligible, but relatively insignificant. With the interests of 4 out of 5 of the world space capable nations at risk any debate here should be about bragging rights and who will get credit for saving the world! Then you may even see China throw its hat into the ring... if they are not already planning to deal with this rock on their own earning a prestige equal to Apollo while the rest of us worry about pennies. If NASA did not see this mission as coming out of their own budget would they have come up with the same plan?

Congress may be poised to nominate a specific candidate agency for dealing with this threat. However, it is certain that whatever its mandate may be any mission to deflect Apophis or any other asteroid is ever to be launched by the United States it will have to be done over the signature and informed approval of the President. When will the Executive Office and those agencies dedicated to the preservation of our nation's security and safety get into the loop on this issue? At present it is highly unlikely that the scope, complexity and density of the objective raw data that constitutes the appreciable tactical elements of this issue are directly comprehensible to anyone at the executive level. If any President is to be expected to make sound strategic decisions it will be

essential to expand the executive intelligence infrastructure. Create a permanent executive advisory counsel dedicated exclusively to screening such data to determine what is strategically relevant and translating that product from the arcane into appropriately subjective executive terms. In its detail this is potentially a vast, complex and dense issue and to be comprehensive any such executive advisory counsel would need to include the skills and encompass the perspectives of a soldier, a scientist and a statesman. We cannot trust scientists to accurately reduce and interpret the objective work product of their own disciplines into any strategically relevant form. They just don't get it. Expecting a good scientist to think like a good soldier would simply be unwise and at NASA they are all good scientists and this is not about science this is about security.

Astronomers often wait decades for new information so is it any surprise that at NASA they are comfortable with the conclusion to wait 15 years to learn all they can about Apophis? Then, if necessary, they will deflect it with some long-shot piece of rocket surgery we have only roughly tested once before by hitting comet Temple 1... a target 400 times larger than Apophis. Such a mission would not be some carefully controlled lab experiment where after you do something once you can easily replicate all the variables and do it again. Success in space is still a result of all the thousands of things that can go wrong not doing so and *here* there *are* dire negative consequences if their plan fails. Yet their 'wait and see plan' does not allow for the very real possibility that their 'last possible moment' deflection approach may miss and all else being equal, any second try will be 20,000 times more difficult. It is clear that they have already assumed a deflection mission will not likely be necessary and if it were such mission simply would not fail! Is this arrogance or blind optimism?

It does not take a direct descendant of Sun Tzu to see that this is a very, very bad plan. However, this plan does demonstrate that even though they may be tactically expert in the astronomy and astrometrics required, you can not trust their strategic conclusions. They simply do not have the strategic sense God gave a bucket of frogs. That said, even though as a general strategic principal, intentionally deciding to not learn as much as possible as soon as possible about a credible threat seems perfectly stupid... they may be right. Optimistically relying on the odds and simulated data and waiting until the last possible minute to deflect this rock may somehow be the smart thing to do! Save a few bucks on rocket fuel! The point here is how is this their call? From what deep well of strategic experience or acuity or resources does NASA draw the credibility and qualifications, or any authority, for making crucial decisions that are deterministic to the safety of the nation? Isn't that your job?

This is about more than just Apophis. The sky really is falling and this is no longer a Chicken Little issue. The observable probability for the specific impact of Apophis in 2036 is currently around 1 in 5,000. Coincidentally, the annual statistical probability for categorically small asteroid impacts is also around 1 in 5,000. Therefore, the 30-year statistical probability for the impact of some small asteroid that we have not yet detected is 30 times greater than the observable probability for the impact of Apophis... Asteroid impacts large or small, are random and aperiodic events and can happen any time with little warning. Unlike other natural threats if we were prepared to deflect these impacts we could do so. And since in its worst case, the magnitude of loss manifest in this threat rises to the level of extinction, clearly, we should do so...

Apophis may or may not be the next asteroid to strike the Earth but it is time to begin appreciating the general threat for what it is. We have nothing that rises to the level of real-time surveillance so we can not count on seeing them coming nor do we have a response capability to afford us any rational sense of safety. We need to empower a specific agency to respond to this threat. But the Executive Office also needs an advisory counsel dedicated exclusively to providing the CinC with the strategically relevant information necessary to ensure that there is sound judgement behind the orders that will make this agency work. When this 'buck' lands on the desk in the Oval Office the President of the United States must be the most qualified man on the planet to save the world.

At your disposal and convenience in this issue,

R. Dale Brownfield
Gaiashield Group

Enclosures:
B612 "A Call for (Considered) Action"
B612 letter to NASA
NASA reply to B612 Foundation
Arguments for a National Planetary Defense Agency: NASA vs. DoD

cc:

V. President Richard Cheney
Hon. Donald H. Rumsfeld

Gen. Peter Pace
Gen. James Cartwright

Dr. Condoleezza Rice
Mr. Steven J. Hadley

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