

OFFICIALS READY GPS III FOR DECEMBER REVIEW, SPRING CONTRACT AWARD

By Amy Butler

The Air Force plans to take its proposal for the Global Positioning System III to the Defense Space Acquisition Board in December and award a contract for the work the following spring, according to the program's manager at Los Angeles Air Force Base, CA.

Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Spectrum Astro, which are working on separate design-study contracts, are expected to be awarded new deals for more detailed analysis work to explore prototype payload development until the downselect next spring, said Col. Doug Loverro, GPS program director. The value of those interim contracts is expected to be about \$6 million apiece, he said during an Oct. 2 interview with *Inside the Air Force*.

Although Loverro refutes the idea, some in government contend the dates for the review and contract award amount to one-year slips compared to previous Air Force plans for the program, which is focused on beginning to launch more accurate and highly jam-resistant GPS satellites in 2012. House and Senate appropriators, in a conference report on the fiscal year 2003 defense bill released Oct. 10, noted the slip and cut \$40 million from the request of \$100.2 million for GPS III.

Loverro said GPS III development and procurement is fully funded in the Air Force's FY-04 spending plan, which was sent to the Office of the Secretary of Defense Sept. 12. He declined to provide an amount.

During the DSAB, tentatively scheduled for Dec. 3, Air Force Under Secretary Peter Teets will review the program's readiness to enter development. Teets is responsible for overseeing the acquisition of all Pentagon space systems.

Under Teets' new acquisition review process, an independent program assessment will be undertaken separately from the GPS program office at Los Angeles AFB. That effort officially began this week; it is being led by Col. Ivette Falto-Heck, Space and Missile Systems Center's chief engineer, Loverro said.

In parallel with that effort, Col. Ron Phillips, stationed at Air Force headquarters, will oversee an independent cost analysis of the proposed program. The IPA's analysis will replace that formerly handled by OSD's Cost Analysis Improvement Group, a process Teets found to be too time consuming.

Loverro said he plans to follow a spiral development path for GPS III that each includes three increments of nine spacecraft.

Officials plan to build the satellites to provide an additional 20 decibels of power -- 100 times more broadcast power -- than those on orbit today.

Additional power is critical because current GPS signals are weak and highly susceptible to jamming even from small, inexpensive and commercially available devices.

The second increment of GPS III development would include an additional 27 decibels of power, a 500-fold improvement over today's capability, Loverro said.

Meanwhile, the Air Force is boosting power available on the GPS IIF and IIR satellites now in production. Those satellites will include about seven times more power than currently available, a total of about 8.9 additional decibels, Loverro said.