

LINE OF SIGHT

A Message from the Editor

My Wish List for the New Administration

By the time you read this editorial, the new presidential administration will have been in office for less than a month. In my estimation, it is just about the right time for the leadership to receive suggestions for future developments that will further and enhance our hobby's capabilities to meet the demands of our national interest. Below, you will read my wish list for the new administration.

NASA and the U.S. Department of Education

This past November the U.S. Department of Education (DOEd) invited the Amateur Radio on board the International Space Station (ARISS) organization to help celebrate the ninth annual International Education Week (IEW) by coordinating three contacts with the International Space Station (ISS) during IEW, November 17–21. This invitation came, according to ARRL ARISS Project Manager Rosalie White, K1STO, after the DOEd had been tracking ARISS's activities for a long time. The joint venture, which also included NASA and the Department of State, was a resounding success. Among the outcomes were both international goodwill and encouraging scientific education among school students. For more information on the project, go to <<http://www.arrl.org/news/stories/2008/12/02/10489>>.

It is my wish that such programs continue and be expanded. Additionally, it is my wish to see more federal funding directed toward NASA's education programs, such as NASA's Space Grant Consortium. Regular readers of this magazine have already read articles about amateur radio related projects that are being run under the auspices of various colleges and universities across the country. These programs have proven to be sources of producing new amateur radio operators. Regarding these programs, it is my wish that NASA assign an employee full time to publicize projects that are being carried out at various state space grant consortia around the country.

Concerning NASA and education, a paltry few of its programs are reaching down to the common school level. In particular, programs need to be developed that reach the elementary and middle-school levels. Any education administrator will tell you that if you have not captured a student's imagination by the early middle-school years, you run a high risk of losing that student's lifetime positive creativity. Therefore, it is my wish that Congress and the President approve and authorize

increased funding to NASA for education-related projects.

FEMA

In the aftermath of the devastating hurricanes and other natural disasters in recent years, regarding communications, FEMA has begun to get its act together. FEMA and the military, along with state and local agencies, are making great strides toward solving interoperability problems.

However, while the government organizations are learning how to effectively communicate with one another, the non-government organizations (NGOs) are beginning to be left behind. While many of us have seen examples of communications vans, trailers, and trucks being operated in the field by the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and the Southern Baptist Hams, these organizations represent only a small fraction of the many NGOs that FEMA has begun to rely upon for disaster recovery work.

For example, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has been tasked by FEMA to handle \$66 million that the U.S. government received from foreign governments in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. While this may seem like a lot of money, FEMA restricts its use to direct assistance to those who qualify for such assistance.

What is lacking for UMCOR and other NGOs is a communications infrastructure that is needed by these organizations when they are tasked by FEMA to respond to disasters. While FEMA has the money it needs for solving its communications problems, these NGOs rely on private contributions to fund items such as emergency radio equipment, emergency operations centers (EOCs), as well as radio-equipped emergency vehicles. It is my wish that FEMA find a way to help these NGOs fund their emergency communications equipment needs—preferably through private sources. It is also my wish that FEMA supply expert telecommunications advisors to these NGOs in their efforts to establish their communications infrastructures.

ITAR

Of ongoing concern to experimenters in our hobby is the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR). Within the amateur radio experimenting community is a growing "ITAR paranoia" as Bill Ress, N6GHZ, comments in his paper "ITAR and AMSAT," which was published in the *Proceedings* of the 2008 AMSAT Symposium. More than one experi-

menter has walked away from the research and development tables at AMSAT-NA as a result of ITAR paranoia. In particular, cooperation between AMSAT-NA and AMSAT-DL has all but stopped because the Americans do not want to inadvertently break the law that prohibits the exportation of what might be deemed as sensitive research and technology.

The sanctions for violating the regulations can run into millions of dollars, as Boeing found out when it was fined \$32 million for its role as successor to the Hughes Corporation, which had (according to the U.S. government) illegally transferred technology to China concerning the January 1995 failed launch of the Long March 2E rocket that was carrying the Hughes-built Apstar 2 spacecraft.

From Wikipedia (see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Traffic_in_Arms_Regulations) is the following concerning the controversy:

There is an open debate between the Department of State and the industries and academia regulated by ITAR concerning how harmful the regulatory restrictions are for U.S. businesses and higher education institutions. The Department of State insists that ITAR has limited effect and provides a security benefit to the nation that outweighs any impact that these sectors must bear. Every year, the Department of State can cite multiple arrests of ITAR violators by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. However, many companies and institutions within the affected areas argue that ITAR is stifling U.S. trade and science. Companies argue that ITAR is a significant trade barrier that acts as a substantial negative subsidy, weakening U.S. industries' ability to compete.

It is my wish that under the new administration a new, healthier look at ITAR may emerge that will positively deal with the concerns within our hobby.

My Final Thoughts

Throughout the history of our hobby, we amateur radio operators have been called upon to provide essential communications and technological skills on behalf of our country. In laying out my wish list for the new presidential administration, I firmly believe that should these wishes be granted, once again the hobby of amateur radio will grow in numbers and therefore be able to provide essential communications and technological skills for use on behalf of our country—as well as the rest of the world. Until next time . . .

73 de Joe, N6CL