

# **Contents**

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Findings</b> .....	3
<b>The Orbital Debris Environment</b> .....	13
Hazards to space Operations From Orbital Debris .....	13
The Nature of Space Debris .....	15
Sources of Orbital Debris .....	17
Trends .....	21
<b>Debris Reduction Strategies</b> .....	21
Preventive Measures .....	22
Active Removal Procedures .....	23
Shielding and Other Protective Measures .....	25
Geostationary Orbit .....	26
<b>Legal Implications</b> .....	26
The Definition of Orbital Debris .....	27
Jurisdiction and Control .....	29
Detection and Identification .....	30
Liability for Damage Caused in Outer Space .....	31
<b>Future Directions for Reducing Orbital Debris</b> .....	33
Characterization of the Debris Environment .....	34
Mitigation and Protection Techniques .....	36
U.S. Research Plans .....	37
International Cooperation .....	38
Crews in Space .....	40
Special Concerns About Geostationary Orbit .....	41
National Security Concerns .....	42
The Private Sector .....	42
<b>Appendix A Collision Probabilities for Satellites.</b> .....	47
<b>Appendix B U.S. Statutes Governing Outer Space</b> .....	49
<b>Appendix C U.S. Commercial Regulatory Programs</b> .....	51

# Contents

## Figures

<i>Figure</i>		<i>Page</i>
1	Cataloged On-Orbit Population . . . . .	2
2	Orbital Debris Relationships . . . . .	4
3	Yearly Changes to the Cataloged Debris Population . . . . .	13
4	Annual Launch Rate By All Nations . . . . .	14
5	U.S. and U.S.S.R. Contributions to the Orbital Population of Cataloged Objects . . . . .	14
6	Detection Capabilities of the Space Surveillance Network . . . . .	16
7	The Evolution of a Debris Cloud . . . . .	19
8	Relative Kinetic Energy Content of Space Debris Objects . . . . .	20
9	Debris Cataloged from the Breakup of the Transit 4A Rocket Body ..	22
10	Spatial Densities in LEO for Various Sizes of Debris . . . . .	24
11	Total Number of Orbital Objects in the Space Surveillance Network Catalog by Nationality . . . . .	39

## Tables

<i>Table</i>		<i>Page</i>
1	Elements of Orbital Debris . . . . .	2
2	Types of Hazardous Interference by Orbital Debris . . . . .	3
3	Space Weapons Tests . . . . .	19
4	Classes of Space Debris . . . . .	29
5	Key Program Needs for Characterizing the Debris Environment . . . . .	34
6	Spacecraft Surfaces Returned From Space Analyzed for Debris Impacts . . . . .	35
7	Radar Performance Requirements . . . . .	36
8	Key Program Needs for Debris Mitigation . . . . .	37
9	Key Program Needs for Protection From Debris . . . . .	37
10	Phase I Summary of Projected Expenditures for the NASA/DOD/DOT Research Plan . . . . .	38
A-1	Probability of Collision . . . . .	47

## Boxes

<i>Box</i>		<i>Page</i>
1	Some Categories of Earth Orbits. . . . .	2
2	Nine Common Misconceptions About Orbital Debris . . . . .	11
3	Selected U.S. Efforts To Increase Awareness of Orbital Debris . . . . .	14
4	The Evolution of a Debris Cloud . . . . .	18
5	International Space Treaties and Agreements . . . . .	28
6	The Long Duration Exposure Facility (LDEF) . . . . .	35
7	Orbital Debris Radar Observations . . . . .	36