Asteroid Updates – July 28th

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\*\*\* New Add-ons\*\*\*

Pre-Positioning Add-On

( ) US nuclear option already set-up – *pre-positioning* these weapons risks miscalc.

Urias ‘96

(et al Maj. Gen. John M. Urias, Program Executive Officer, Air and Missile Defense – Air Force 2025 Report –

http://csat.au.af.mil/2025/volume3/vol3ch16.pdf)

The fact that it may only happen once in several lifetimes does not absolve the current defense team of at least a moral responsibility if it does happen, particularly if it had the means to prevent or at least mitigate it. Perhaps for the first time in not only human history but the entire history of the planet, the inhabitants of earth are on the verge of having such capability. Currently, the chemical and nuclear propulsion systems now in development offer the best options for planetary defense. Employment of nuclear devices in a standoff mode represents the gentle nudge of all the options available. Though technically much more difficult, nuclear devices exploded on or beneath the object's surface impart 10 or more times the impulse of a standoff explosion.45 International concern for use of these weapons leads to many political questions and misgivings. Ironically, these devices "could be notably straightforward to create and safe to maintain because they derive from vast research and development expenditures and experience accumulated during the forty-five years of the Cold War."46 Technically, without an appropriate reentry vehicle, these devices could not be used as ballistic weapons, though there is always the possibility of terrorism or misuse. In any event, effective international protocols and controls could be established through the United Nations to minimize downside potential. The debate will certainly continue, however, as evidenced in The Deflection Dilemma: Use vs. Misuse of Technologies for Avoiding Interplanetary Hazards: "The potential for misuse of a system built in advance of an explicit need may in the long run expose us to a greater risk than the added protection it offers."47 The greatest challenge involves the building of international coordination, cooperation, and support. The threat of ECOs is a global problem and one which the entire world community should be concerned with. Coordination between nations, international organizations, DOD, NASA, DOE, academia, and others in the scientific community is essential in establishing the building blocks for a credible PDS. It is necessary to build trust, coordinate resources, consolidate efforts, and seek cooperation with and support for similar efforts in the international community.

( ) Causes nuclear conflict with China.

Twomey ‘9

(Christopher – Professor at the Naval Postgraduate College, “Chinese-U.S. Strategic Affairs”, Arms Control Association, January/February 2009, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009\_01-02/china\_us\_dangerous\_dynamism,)

China and the United States are not in a strategic weapons arms race. Nonetheless, their modernization and sizing decisions increasingly are framed with the other in mind. Nuclear weapons are at the core of this interlocking pattern of development. In particular, China is the only permanent member of the UN Security Council expanding its arsenal; it is also enhancing its arsenal. The basic facts of Chinese strategic modernization are well known, if the details remain frustratingly opaque. China is deploying road-mobile, solid-fueled missiles, giving it a heighted degree of security in its second-strike capability. It is beginning to deploy ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs). It is researching a wide range of warhead and delivery systems technologies that will lead to increased accuracy and, more pointedly, increased penetration against ballistic missile defenses. The size of China's deliverable arsenal against the United States will undoubtedly increase beyond the few dozen that it possessed recently.[1] The pace of growth thus far has been moderate, although China has only recently developed reliable, survivable delivery systems. The final endpoint remains mired in opacity and uncertainty, although several score of deliverable warheads seems likely for the near term. These developments on the strategic side are coupled with elements of conventional modernization that impinge on the strategic balance.[2] The relevant issue, however, is not simply an evaluation of the Chinese modernization program, but rather an evaluation of the interaction of that modernization with U.S. capabilities and interests. U.S. capabilities are also changing. Under the provisions of START and SORT, the United States has continued to engage in quantitative reductions of its operational nuclear arsenal. At the same, there is ongoing updating of warhead guidance and fusing systems. Ballistic missile defense systems of a variety of footprints are being deployed. The U.S. SSBN force now leans more toward the Pacific than the Atlantic, reversing the Cold War deployment. Guam's capacity to support heavy bombers and attack submarines has been enhanced. Furthermore, advances in U.S. conventional weaponry have been so substantial that they too promise strategic effects: prompt global strike holds out the promise of a U.S. weapon on target anywhere in the world in less than an hour and B-2s with highly accurate weapons can sustain strategic effects over a campaign. What are the concerns posed by these two programs of dynamic strategic arsenals? Most centrally, the development of the strategic forces detailed above has increasingly assumed an interlocked form. The U.S. revolution in precision guided munitions was followed by an emphasis on mobility in the Chinese missile force. U.S. missile defense systems have clearly spurred an emphasis on countermeasures in China's ICBM force and quantitative buildups in its regional missile arsenals.[3] Beijing's new submarine-based forces further enhance the security of China's second-strike capability in the face of a potential U.S. strike but are likely to lead to increased attention to anti-submarine warfare in the United States. China's recent anti-satellite test provoked a U.S. demonstration of similar capabilities. Such reciprocal responses have the potential to move toward a tightly coupled arms race and certainly have already worsened threat perceptions on each side. The potential for conflict is not simply that of inadvertent escalation; there are conflicts of interests between the two. Heightening threat perceptions in that context greatly complicates diplomacy. Further, the dangers of inadvertent escalation have been exacerbated by some of these moves. Chinese SSBN deployment will stress an untested command-and-control system. Similar dangers in the Cold War were mitigated, although not entirely overcome, over a period of decades of development of personnel and technical solutions. China appears to have few such controls in place today. U.S. deployment of highly accurate nuclear warheads is consistent with a first-strike doctrine and seems sized for threats larger than "rogue" nations. These too would undermine stability in an intense crisis.

Military Superiority Add-on

( ) US Asteroid tracking necessary to maintain US military superiority.

Worden & Shaw ‘2

SIMON P. WORDEN Brigadier General, USAF and JOHN E. SHAW Major, USAF

Fairchild Paper – Air University Press – Whither Space Power ?.. http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/au/wordenshaw.pdf

An additional concern about tracking NEOs is that if the United States does not use its current assets to perform this function, others will—for scientific reasons if nothing else. In-deed, international scientific organizations have repeatedly called for an international network to monitor NEOs. Just as a military surveillance system can pick up NEOs, a civil system to monitor NEOs will pick up military and commercial satellites. This “battle space awareness” is a decisive advantage. It could be in the United States’ interest to deter others from constructing such an “open-to-all” database by modifying our own system and making the militarily insensitive but scientifically invaluable data available to all.

( ) that edge is key to overall military effectiveness.

Kyl ‘7

The Honorable Jon Kyl (R-AZ) is a member of the U.S. Senate. He is ranking minority member of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security, as well as chair of the Senate Republican Conference. SECTION: THE HERITAGE LECTURES; No. 990; Pg. 1 – Heritage Foundation Reports

February 1, 2007 -- lexis

More important, satellites underpin our military superiority. Our troops rely on satellites for reconnaissance, communications, navigation, and other functions. Almost every new military platform in development today is more satellite-dependent than the system it is replacing. None of our military operations -- conventional, strategic, or missile defense -- can function without space components.

( ) That causes global nuclear war

Felzenberg ‘11

(Alvin S., Lecturer – University of Pennsylvania and Yale University and Alexander B. Gray, Ph.D. Candidate in International Affairs – George Washington University, “The New Isolationism”, The National Review, 1-3, http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/256150/new-isolationism-alvin-s-felzenberg)

Anything Reps. Ron Paul (R., Tex.) and Barney Frank (D., Mass.) both support should give the rest of us pause. Their proposal to slash defense spending by $1 trillion over a decade — only the most recent joint effort by the new isolationists on the Left and Right to curtail American military strength around the world — is as foolhardy as it is unrealistic. Were such a policy enacted, the nation and the world would be set on a path not toward peace, but toward instability, conflict, and a lessening of freedom in many corners of the world. As the deteriorating situation on the Korean peninsula reminds us, the security concerns of the United States do not disappear in times of economic distress. America’s interests, whether economic, strategic, diplomatic, or moral, cannot be set aside when Congress tires of them. The United States and the world paid a severe price for the ostrich-like behavior too many democratic nations exhibited during the 1920s and 1930s. Reps. Paul and Frank appear determined to repeat this mistake. The United States continues to face an array of global challenges that require a modern, technologically superior military. It is very much in the interests of the United States to uphold the territorial integrity and economic independence of much of Asia, maintain the security of critical waterways such as the Strait of Hormuz, and protect American trade from pirates and terrorists worldwide. Rather than regard the nation’s defenses as a ready source of money available for diversion to domestic concerns, Congress and the president should identify the challenges America faces and assure that its military is able to meet them. At its core, the Frank-Paul effort appears to be an attempt to prevent repetitions of wars the two congressmen regard as either unnecessary or faultily executed. But the United States has broader and more important long-run national-security concerns than Iraq and Afghanistan. As the U.S. became bogged down in those two countries, it began feeling strains elsewhere, precipitated by China, Russia, and potentially toxic menaces such as Iran and Venezuela. Counterinsurgency warfare and Predator-drone strikes against transnational terrorists certainly defined much of the last decade. But the next decade will witness increasing competition among nation-states for control of valuable resources and the exertion of influence worldwide. Russia, through its control of vital energy pipelines, seeks to draw Western Europe more closely into its orbit, thereby weakening the latter’s historical ties to the United States. By taking a similar approach to Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, the Baltics, and Moldova, Russia is on the verge of re-colonizing economically many of its former satellites.  China, while continuing to upgrade its naval capabilities, grows increasingly assertive. In pursuit of its own Monroe Doctrine for East Asia, Beijing has proclaimed its sovereignty over the entire South China Sea, menaced neighbors from India to Vietnam, used its economic muscle to intimidate Japan, and increased its threats against Taiwan. China’s leaders have been studying the writings of the 19th-century American naval theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan, who demonstrated the connection between sea power and economic strength. At the turn of the last century, Theodore Roosevelt found in Mahan the blueprint for achieving unprecedented American influence in world affairs. His efforts to build both a strong navy and a sound economy ushered in the “American century,” the period in which the United States became a force for good throughout the world and a beacon of hope for those yearning to breathe free. In pursuing a “blue-water” ocean-going navy capable of supporting their expanding global economic ambitions, the Chinese are acting from a desire to defend their nation’s trade and access to world markets, with a focus on energy supplies. It is critical that the Chinese — who are closely studying both Mahan’s writings and the history of the Monroe Doctrine — and Americans who see Chinese hegemony over Asia as either inevitable or a price they are willing to pay in exchange for slashing defense spending not draw the wrong lessons from history. Both sides should understand that it was not American might that gave the Monroe Doctrine force, but the then all-powerful British navy. For much of the 19th century, Great Britain had reasons of its own for keeping other nations out of the Western Hemisphere and for wanting to see the United States develop internally. If appropriately funded, the United States Navy has the capacity to play a similar role in China’s rise — perhaps, in the process, influencing how China develops. Should China conclude that the United States intends to remain a visible and active presence in the region, it will respond accordingly. Acting together, the two nations might embark on a series of cooperative ventures designed to help assure a steady flow of trade and an unimpeded exchange of people, goods, and ideas. They can also work together to combat a rise in piracy and terrorism in Asia and elsewhere and to respond to humanitarian crises, like the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. For its part, China, should it continue to hold North Korea in check, will achieve some of the status it seeks as a rising world power, with commensurate influence on the world stage.  Should China conclude, on the other hand, that the United States intends to turn inward, it may grow even more ambitious and assertive in its region and beyond, potentially menacing world peace. Its smaller neighbors nervously wait to see how the United States will respond to China’s growing assertiveness. Should they come to believe that the U.S. is in retreat, they will make their own accommodations with Beijing. That result would wreak irreparable damage both to America’s economy and to its security.  Messrs. Frank and Paul and their supporters have taken it into their minds that a reduced American presence in world affairs, particularly where the military is involved, would be a good thing. They had better think again: World politics, like nature, is hardly prone to respect vacuums. Iran and Venezuela remain as bellicose and destabilizing as ever, in spite of two years of Obama “engagement.” Iran squats beside the Strait of Hormuz, through which much of the world’s energy supply travels. Iran has also, the original Monroe Doctrine be damned, extended its military cooperation with Hugo Chávez’s authoritarian regime. Evidence is strong that Venezuela is providing sanctuary for Hezbollah terrorists in South America. The alliance of these two anti-American and increasingly menacing states could pose a threat to the United States of a kind that would make us nostalgic for the Cuban Missile Crisis. Faced with such challenges, the United States can ill afford military retrenchment as advocated by the new isolationists. While waste in the Pentagon’s budget can and should be cut, the new isolationists want to do it with a chainsaw when a scalpel is needed. In the last decade, the U.S. Navy’s fleet has shrunk to its smallest size since the 19th century, just as potential rivals such as China have not only expanded theirs but have begun to target perceived American maritime vulnerabilities. The U.S. Air Force is fielding an aging and shrinking force, while China is developing an advanced fighter for sale to adversaries of America, including Iran. A world in which the United States willingly ceded power and influence would both be more dangerous and prove less receptive to values that most Americans share, such as respect for human rights, the need to restrain governments through the rule of law, and the sanctity of contracts. By reducing its military strength to alarmingly low levels, the United States would create dangerous power vacuums around the world that other nations, with entirely different values, would be only too happy to fill. That, as history shows, would make war more, rather than less, likely. Congress and the president would do well to reflect on those lessons and remember their duty to provide a dominant American military presence on land, at sea, and in the air.

\*\*\* New A-to non-US Cplans \*\*\*

Additional US Key Cards

( ) US Key – DOD leadership vital and other nations cannot succeed.

Urias ‘96

(et al Maj. Gen. John M. Urias, Program Executive Officer, Air and Missile Defense – Air Force 2025 Report –

http://csat.au.af.mil/2025/volume3/vol3ch16.pdf)

Why should the DOD take an active interest in the planetary defense issue? Given such a scenario, the effects could threaten the national security of the US, even if it were not physically impacted. Certainly, the international community cannot deal with a disaster in which a significant portion the world is destroyed. All surviving nations would be affected. The devastating blows to governmental and societal structures could be equivalent to those thought of when talking about a post-global-nuclear war holocaust, but lacking perhaps the lethal radiation effects. More importantly, once a threat is detected in advance, the nation and perhaps the entire planet will quite naturally look to the DOD to provide the means, technical expertise, and leadership, in addition to the required forces, to counter such a threat to its citizens’ lives and well-being. A number of other US organizations and agencies will certainly be involved, including NASA, Department of Energy (DOE), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and national laboratories and universities. There will also most likely be an international effort to include the United Nations. Currently, Russia, Great Britain, France, Canada, Japan, Australia, China, Italy, the Czech Republic, and other nations have shown an interest in this topic. However, few organizations other than the DOD have the experience and capability to even attempt such an effort.

( ) Air Force solves best – can use already-existing space satellites for tracking

Borchers ‘9

(Brent W. Borchers, Major, USAF, “Should the USAF be Involved in Planetary Defense?”, AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE AIR UNIVERSITY – A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements Advisors: Lt Col Timothy W. Wolf Major Jonathon E. Lowe Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama April 2009 – available via google – I think this link will work, let me know if it will not. https://www.afresearch.org/skins/rims/q\_mod.../display.aspx?)

With all these problems, possible solutions, and political considerations, where does this leave the future of planetary defense and what is the U.S. Air Force’s role in this possible mission? We’ve established that the threat of a NEO impacting the earth is real based on the probabilities the scientists have computed and the evidence of past strikes on the earth and the associated consequences. We’ve also established that in order to prepare for an impact from a NEO we need to track and identify these objects to gain valuable warning time. The USAF can further assist with this effort. Although NASA seems to be doing fairly well in the Spaceguard survey, their efforts can probably be helped by the Air Force Space Surveillance Network (AFSSN). The AFSSN maintains a worldwide presence of radar and optical based tracking stations that virtually cover the globe. These assets could be used to augment the NASA work and confirm some of their observations. A lot of the AFSSN capability remains in the classified arena and cannot be discussed here but some efficiencies could be gained here. The AF also controls most of the satellites in orbit or has a liaison capability with the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) who controls the NRO satellites. Some of these assets could also be used to track NEOs that seemed to pose a larger than average threat to the earth. The USAF would be in a better position than any other agency to liaise with the NRO to accomplish this.

Perm Solvency Card – Aff

Double-solvency matters in the context of asteroids

Borchers ‘9

(Brent W. Borchers, Major, USAF, “Should the USAF be Involved in Planetary Defense?”, AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE AIR UNIVERSITY – A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements Advisors: Lt Col Timothy W. Wolf Major Jonathon E. Lowe Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama April 2009 – available via google – I think this link will work, let me know if it will not. https://www.afresearch.org/skins/rims/q\_mod.../display.aspx?)

Testing a complicated system like any of the previously mentioned solutions is invaluable because the amount of effort and lead time dedicated to a destruction/deflection mission of a NEO is so great that we might only have one launch or one opportunity. A reason for the long lead time needed is illustrated in this example. If an amount of one megaton of blast energy is needed to deflect an object when it is ten years away from impacting the earth, just a one year slip in the launch time that you can reach the object to deflect it results in 100 times greater energy needed to deflect the object at nine years out versus deflecting it when it was ten years out from earth. Waiting one year causes you to use 100 megatons of blast energy versus one. Having a system that is redundant is also desirable. If one system fails at launch or fails en route to the rendezvous with the object, there may not be enough time to launch a second one with enough energy to move the object unless a second interceptor is launched or ready on the pad at a moment’s notice. Even taking it a step further and launching interceptors with redundant capabilities in sets of threes would seem to limit the chance of complete failure to an acceptable level (if there is such a level when speaking of these types of consequences). Once your interceptor reaches the target how do you ensure and validate that it is working besides the fact that it has arrived on station? How many years or months does an organization have to observe miniscule changes in orbital parameters to ensure that the object’s velocity is being slowed by tenths of meters per second, or how can you ensure that it’s heading is being changed ever so slightly and can be measured to the thousandths or millionths of a degree? New technology or new methods must be developed to provide accurate and timely feedback to ensure the system is working. The stakes are too high and one cannot sit around and wait and assume that the orbit of the object is changing and being affected while we waste valuable time not trying a secondary method or launching a backup interceptor.

\*\*\* New Politics Stuff \*\*\*

Plan Popular – Asteroid Specific

( ) NEO Aff popular – also proves White House already invested on this issue

David ‘10

Leonard David has been reporting on the space industry for more than five decades. He is past editor-in-chief of the National Space Society's Ad Astra and Space World magazines and has written for SPACE.com since 1999. Christian Science Monitor – July 20, 2010 – http://www.csmonitor.com/Science/2010/0720/Asteroid-threat-Don-t-worry-Congress-is-looking-into-it?sms\_ss=digg

Lawmakers are paying new attention to how best to shield Earth from a bad day — getting whacked by an asteroid or comet that has our planet in its cross-hairs. A new bill introduced to Congress proposes establishing a government-sponsored commission to study the threat of a major space rock collision with Earth and how prepared we are — as a country and a planet — to face such a danger. There is a growing choir of concern regarding Near Earth Objects, or NEOs – spotting them and dealing with any Earth-threatening gatecrashers. While the annual probability of the Earth being struck by a huge asteroid or comet is small, the consequences of such a collision are so calamitous that it is prudent to appraise the nature of the threat and prepare to deal with it, experts say. [Gallery: Holes in the Earth] Last month, Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R – CA) introduced the new bill before Congress, H.R. 5587, titled: "To establish a United States Commission on Planetary Defense and for other purposes." The bill has been referred to the Committee on Science and Technology, on which Rohrabacher serves as a member. Both sides of the aisle are now looking at the commission idea. Planetary readiness "We need to take the next step," Rohrabacher told SPACE.com. "Our NEO search and tracking program continues to move forward, but nobody is taking responsibility for protection. I am more confident than ever in our ability to identify potential threats from asteroids and comets, but it is critical to the future of humanity that we develop the capabilities to protect ourselves from those threats." Rohrabacher said that the Commission on Planetary Defense that he is proposing will review our planetary readiness for an impact event and make recommendations on how to develop an adequate response system to those threats. As outlined in the bill, the purposes of the commission would be to: \* Determine capabilities of United States Government entities, nongovernment organizations, foreign governments and entities, and international bodies to detect, characterize, and neutralize potentially dangerous Near Earth Objects; \* Identify and evaluate roles and responsibilities of United States Government entities to detect, characterize, and neutralize potentially dangerous NEOs; \* Determine United States effectiveness in leading international efforts to detect, characterize, and neutralize potentially dangerous NEOs; \* Build upon United States Government and foreign analyses, studies, and assessments, without duplicating efforts, to determine current and required NEO characterization and mitigation capabilities; \* Identify and report on technology development required to provide effective planetary defense from dangerous NEOs; and \* Investigate and report to the President and Congress on its findings, conclusions, and recommendations for corrective measures that can be taken to provide planetary defense. One function of the proposed seven-member commission is to assess the current ability of United States and foreign technology to defend our planet. Technologies that could aid the fight against a NEO threat include modeling and simulation capabilities, as well as nuclear devices, high order explosive systems, and laser systems. The bill also requests a budget "not to exceed" $2 million for the commission. Unexpected impact Rohrabacher's initiative joins a rising tide of interest in NEOs. For example, earlier this year, the prestigious National Research Council issued a report on Defending Planet Earth: Near-Earth Object Surveys and Hazard Mitigation Strategies. This study was carried out at the joint request of NASA and the U.S. Congress. The White House is engaged in identifying an agency to be responsible for NEO threat mitigation. Similarly, the NASA Advisory Council Ad-Hoc Task Force on Planetary Defense is also deliberating on next steps. Speaking at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida last April, President Barack Obama outlined plans for NASA that included sending an astronaut expedition to an asteroid by 2025. Such a trip could teach scientists a great deal about space rocks, including knowledge that might help prevent a calamitous collision with one. Moreover, the Obama administration's just-issued National Space Policy calls for pursuing capabilities, in cooperation with other departments, agencies, and commercial partners, "to detect, track, catalog, and characterize near-Earth objects to reduce the risk of harm to humans from an unexpected impact on our planet and to identify potentially resource-rich planetary objects."

Plan = Unpopular – Asteroid Specific

 ( ) Any deflection scheme drains capital – get bogged-down in Congressional wars over which districts get contracting dollars.

Borchers ‘9

(Brent W. Borchers, Major, USAF, “Should the USAF be Involved in Planetary Defense?”, AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE AIR UNIVERSITY – A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements Advisors: Lt Col Timothy W. Wolf Major Jonathon E. Lowe Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama April 2009 – available via google – I think this link will work, let me know if it will not. https://www.afresearch.org/skins/rims/q\_mod.../display.aspx?)

Whoever gets the final nod to go ahead with the project of planetary defense, chances are there would be a lot of debate in Congress as to who gets the funding for such a project and some of it probably won’t be altruistic in nature. Senators and Representatives could be swayed to vote for a certain agency to take the lead depending on the economic impact it would have in their districts. This problem is exacerbated because we’re talking about building a system before we need it. Most people still wouldn’t see a NEO as a serious threat and the elected representatives may only see this project as a “cash cow” to argue over on Capitol Hill and play politics within their districts. To this day there are still Congressional “food fights” that we see over who gets to build the next tanker aircraft for the USAF or the next search and rescue helicopter contract for the AF. These “food fights” in Congress don’t really take into account what the organization knows that it needs or what it wants for the mission. We’d have to be sure such a problem doesn’t derail a planetary defense project before it is even started.

( ) Our giggle factor link. We’ll win the spin game, even supporters tend to not take asteroid policy seriously

France ‘9

(Colonel (USAF) Martin E. B. France – Air & Space Power Journal - Español Primer Trimestre 2009 – April 1st 2009 – http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/apjinternational/apj-s/2009/1tri09/franceeng.htm)

The Giggle Factor (GF). Mention "Planetary Defense" and you’ll soon understand. Even without invoking the sinister vision of alien beings arriving to enslave or destroy humanity, the eyebrows of serious and senior members of the national defense and scientific communities go askew when the subject is broached, whether at cocktail parties or congressional budget hearings. Even the most ardent supporters of defending the Earth from cataclysmic cometary or asteroidal impacts share occasional public or private chuckles with colleagues and skeptics—behavior considered unthinkable when discussing means to avert or mitigate the catastrophic epidemics, wars of aggression and genocide, and terrestrial natural disasters that have peppered man’s history on Earth.

( ) Plan not popular – Asteroid policy not seen as pressing to incumbents

Somin ‘11

(ILYA SOMIN is an Associate Professor at George Mason University School of Law.The Volokh Conspiracy – March 14, 2011 – lexis)

By contrast, some large disasters, such as the recent 8.9 rated earthquake in Japan or Hurricane Katrina, happen only once in many decades. The probability that such a disaster will hit during the tenure of incumbent political leaders is very low. Therefore, incumbents may well choose to underprepare for them and instead spend public funds on more visible programs that will have a greater impact on their electoral chances. If voters were well-informed, they would punish such myopic policies at the polls. However, most voters know little or nothing about disaster prevention policy, and are unlikely to notice if politicians dont devote sufficient resources to preparing for rare but large-scale catastrophes. Perhaps the voters will notice when the rare disaster finally does strike. By that time, however, the officials who made the relevant spending decisions years ago will be long gone. This factor likely helps explain why both the state and federal governments failed to build strong enough levies to protect against a hurricane the magnitude of Katrina, even though Louisiana was a major recipient of federal infrastructure grants. It also is probably one of the reasons why we are currently failing to devote sufficient resources to asteroid defense. The chance that an asteroid will hit during the tenure of the incumbent president and Congress is extremely low, thereby giving them little incentive to devote resources to stopping it. But if a large asteroid does hit us, it could destroy civilization as we know it, just as an earlier asteroid strike wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago.