

"Inside NSS" (July 1997)

FROM NSS HQ

NSS Executive Director David Brandt made the following statement June 30 on the Mir/cargocraft collision as stabilization efforts continue on board the space station:

¶ "There is no doubt left in anyone's mind that this was, and still remains, a serious situation.¶ Everyone is safe for now; this fact attests to the ingenuity of the Russian cosmonauts and American astronaut who are onboard.¶ However, for the immediate future, we remain vigilant of the relationship between the Russian Space Agency and NASA.¶ We urge NASA Administrator Dan Goldin and NASA shuttle Mir Director Frank Culbertson to ensure that the lines of communication are open, that facts and stories gel, and that the decision made to stay or evacuate is made by fully and equally informed parties.

¶ We understand that NASA and the Russian Space Agency have already agreed to a joint review to investigate this accident.¶ However, we strongly urge that this review be preceded or supplemented with a top to bottom safety review of Mir, first by the astronauts and then possibly by Congress.¶ In the case of the astronauts, who better to review the safety of the Russian's space station than those who have been and worked there?¶ The Mir is the longest lived space station and has provided the U.S. with invaluable, and probably less expensive, training and research opportunities to lay the foundation for construction and occupation of the International Space Station (ISS) beginning next year.¶ However, when maintenance of the Mir substantially interferes with a crew's ability to perform that science, the time has come to leave Mir behind and look forward to the new environments and opportunities to be provided by the ISS."