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May 13, 2005

National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency  
Attn: Public Release of Aeronautical Products  
Mail Stop D-111  
4600 Sangamore Road  
Bethesda, MD 20816-5003

**Subject: MEDIA RELEASE NGA-04-11**

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Soaring Society of America (SSA) represents over 12,400 members and was founded in 1932 to foster and promote all phases of soaring. The organization is involved in safety and flight training programs, technological research and development and representation to Federal agencies – activities pursued in support of and in order to advance the art, sport and science of soaring.

In the promotion of flight safety, and in support of the development of navigation technology, SSA facilitates distribution of current airspace information to its members.

### **SSA Position**

Because glider pilots depend directly on the DAFIF database, the Soaring Society of America opposes the withdrawal of the database from public distribution.

### **Rationale**

Although gliders rarely follow set course lines, they are often navigated over distances of a hundred miles or more. A typical “task” involves flying to predetermined waypoints, with a return to the starting point. Position fixes are recorded by purpose-built flight data recorders.

Computer programs are used to plan tasks and to analyze the post-flight log of position fixes. Onboard navigation equipment is used to optimize the glider’s path and to monitor its position with respect to controlled airspace.

Both the computer programs and the onboard electronics depend on having current airspace information. The source of this information is the publicly-available DAFIF database. No commercial vendor or government contractor provides airspace information in a format that can be used by glider pilots. At present, volunteer members of this organization excerpt DAFIF data, combine it with waypoint data, and convert it to a format that can be used by gliding instruments and computer programs.

The loss of public access to the DAFIF database would have a serious impact on glider operations and flight safety in the United States. It is very unlikely that an alternate source of gliding-specific airspace data would be made available by an existing government contractor.

### **Summary**

The unique needs of glider pilots in the areas of flight planning, navigation, and post-flight analysis require access to current airspace data. The only source of this information now, and for the foreseeable future, is the DAFIF database. On behalf of its members, the Soaring Society of America respectfully requests that the DAFIF database remain publicly available.

Please contact us if you need more information in your consideration of our position. Thank you for your kind consideration of our comments to this important issue.

Cordially,



C. Dennis Wright  
Executive Director

cc: Government Liaison Committee