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These management arrangements gave the system program director (Director, SAFSP) responsibility for overall system engineering (including master system specifications) and integration, preparation of the system for launching, the actual launching, on-orbit operations, and recovery activities. There were, of course, restraints on the scope of the SPO authority in certain areas. For example, the overall system engineering and integration responsibilities of the SPO would include all interfaces with the sensor subsystem, but not system engineering or technical direction for the sensor subsystem itself. On the other hand, the SPO, in the exercise of interface responsibility, was expected to meet the basic structural, dynamic, and thermal power requirements of the sensor subsystem.¹⁸⁵

It was stated clearly in the management documents that HEXAGON would be an integrated system in which the sensor subsystem would be embedded within the satellite vehicle, in contrast to being a separate, bolted-on "payload" section. This feature added to the complexity of the source-selection process. The two sensor competitors had generally ill-defined and widely divergent structural, electrical, and thermal interfaces with the satellite. Similarly there were four satellite competitors with widely differing concepts. Both SAFSP and CIA recognized that after the contractors were selected there would be a period of intense interface negotiation, compromise, and modification of design to create an integrated system. They estimated that this negotiation would take about three months.