May 28, 2014

Ms. Marlene Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Reply Comments of MOBILE SATELLITE USERS ASSOCIATION  
In the Matter of Terrestrial Use of the 2473-2495 MHz Band for Low-Power Mobile Broadband Networks; Amendments to Rules for the Ancillary Terrestrial Component of Mobile Satellite Service Systems  
Notice of Proposed Rulemaking IB Docket No. 13-213, RM-11685

Dear Ms. Dortch,

The Mobile Satellite Users Association (“MSUA”)\(^1\) hereby files these Reply Comments in response to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking released by the Commission on November 1, 2013 inviting comment under the above-captioned proceeding.

In its prior proceeding proposing changes to the 2 GHz band, the Commission noted that “each MSS Band is differently situated” and that it was taking a “band-specific approach.”\(^2\) As MSUA highlighted within its Comments filed both in that proceeding and in RM-11685, there is very substantial and critical use of the L-band and Big LEO bands for Mobile Satellite Services, which makes it essential for the Commission to continue this band-specific approach. In particular, MSUA is concerned to ensure that operators continue to provide MSS services in the L-band and Big LEO band to meet these critical needs, and to take advantage of the advanced MSS capabilities that have resulted from the billions of dollars of investment made in new MSS satellites over the last decade.

MSUA therefore supports the instant NPRM proposal to take a band-specific approach to terrestrial use of the 2473-2495 MHz band. Similarly, MSUA notes that the FCC is

\(^{1}\) MSUA is a non-profit association created for, and dedicated to, promoting and safeguarding the interests of users of mobile satellite communications worldwide. While other associations and trade groups may promote the interests of spacecraft suppliers, equipment vendors, and the like, MSUA is focused specifically on representing the interests of users. MSUA performs its functions on behalf of its members by fostering greater communications and information exchange among and between mobile satellite system users, suppliers of equipment and services, operators of MSS satellite systems, financial markets, and various government entities that can impact the future of MSS services to its members. In addition, MSUA provides a means of assembling the views of MSS users on system and service concerns and for conveying these concerns to the appropriate authorities. Additional information about MSUA can be found at http://www.msua.org/

also considering additional factors as part of a band-specific approach to future use of the 1610-1626.5 MHz portion of the Big LEO band. These reply comments are limited to Globalstar’s proposed terrestrial operations in the 2473-2495 MHz band.

As MSUA noted in its July 24, 2013 comments in ET Docket 13-49, MSS services are designed to meet the critical needs of users in disasters and other situations where other wireless technologies are unavailable. There has been very rapid growth in demand for MSS services in recent years, particularly in North America, and it is important to ensure that these services, which are of great public benefit and offer lifesaving capabilities to hundreds of thousands of end users across the United States, are not constrained by harmful interference or a lack of capacity to meet demonstrated user demand. This is of particular concern in disaster situations such as hurricanes or earthquakes, where terrestrial wireless networks may be rendered inoperable, and MSS systems may then provide one of the only options to meet the need for critical communications. Ubiquity and reliability are essential to MSS’s benefits to the public interest and the Commission should not take any steps that could increase harmful interference or otherwise limit the usability of MSS services, such as by introducing incompatible operations in MSS spectrum bands.

MSUA is committed to ensure that commercial MSS continues to be offered in those frequency bands where MSS is currently operated. MSUA therefore seeks to ensure that any terrestrial services offered in the 2473-2495 MHz band do not cause interference to existing and planned satellite services in either the Big LEO band or adjacent frequency bands. If this can be achieved, then MSUA hopes and expects that additional benefits will accrue to current and future MSS users from increased investment in the sector. Globalstar has indicated that the band-edge restriction and unwanted emissions limits currently applicable to Wi-Fi Channels 12 and 13 “are necessary in order to protect MSS in the 2483.5-2495 MHz band” and we expect that Globalstar will also need to manage carefully the operation of its similar “low-power ATC” services to protect MSS users, should its proposal be adopted.

MSUA welcomes Globalstar’s statement that it “is fully committed to the continued development and future success of its MSS business.” However, MSUA also notes that the Commission proposes to relax the ATC gating criteria so that Globalstar is no longer required to provide “detailed showings concerning satellite system coverage” and instead would only be required to demonstrate that it is “offering commercial MSS.” MSUA is concerned that there is a lack of information in the record demonstrating how Globalstar’s “low-power ATC” service will coexist with its MSS, including in Globalstar’s May 5 Comments in this proceeding. Though the Commission concludes that “Globalstar’s [terrestrial] operations would also need to protect other licensed services from harmful interference to the extent required under current rules” it is far from clear how much interference would be caused to existing MSS users by the proposed “low-power ATC” service and what the implications would be for satellite system coverage. Specific information and guidance on the impact of “low-power ATC” deployments

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on MSS should also be made available to any affected MSS end users, in order to ensure that their attempts to communicate are not impaired by unexpected interference.

In addition, the Commission’s proposal does not specify which “commercial MSS” services are required to be provided and in which locations. MSUA applauds Globalstar’s development in recent years of several highly innovative, lifesaving MSS services, such as its SPOT messenger devices, upon which hundreds of thousands of consumers in the United States (and internationally) rely for safety critical services in hazardous environments. Globalstar also offers handheld and fixed satellite phone services to around 100,000 subscribers, many of them located in the United States, and plans to introduce more capable higher speed data services with its second generation satellite system, into which over $1 billion has been invested. It is important that the numerous existing users of Globalstar’s MSS services can continue to rely on these services and MSUA therefore suggests that any modification to the ATC gating criteria should also incorporate a requirement for Globalstar to continue to support its current commercial services (or comparable offerings) within the United States as a condition of offering terrestrial “low-power ATC.”

Please contact the undersigned with any questions regarding this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Farrar
MSUA President