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### The Real Deflection Dilemma

The term “deflection dilemma” originated in articles in the early 90s by Carl Sagan, Alan Harris, Steve Ostro and others to describe the reciprocity inherent in the capability of humankind to deflect asteroids away from collisions with the Earth. I.e., if one can deflect an incoming asteroid away from a collision with Earth, one can also deflect a passing asteroid toward a collision, presumably a collision with a specific Earth target. While the author considers this historic dilemma to be virtually non-existent there exists a “real” and significant deflection dilemma which cannot be avoided if the Earth is ever to be protected from asteroid impact. The dilemma arises in the Hobson’s choice between doing nothing, thereby suffering the consequences of an impact, or pro-actively deflecting an asteroid which will, in the process of “protecting the Earth”, necessarily place otherwise non-threatened people and property at risk. As the deflection is initiated the change of impact point (IP) from the original "act of God" IP becomes an "act of humankind" IP-path as the instantaneous IP moves across the surface of the Earth to a point where the asteroid just "misses" the Earth (the "lift-off point"). All points along this IP-path are placed in jeopardy by the possibility of system failure during the deflection operation. Given that the populations and property put in jeopardy will, in the general case, extend across international boundaries the planning and execution of such a deflection mission will necessitate international coordination and perhaps control. Grappling with these daunting issues by an appropriate international body should be undertaken immediately since the development of rational policies will be extremely difficult after an impact is announced and an IP specified.