



Fig. 15.30. Comparative sizes and masses of the first three Earth satellites, Sputnik 1, Explorer I, and Vanguard I. Figure courtesy of Mike Gruntman.

## BIRTH OF NASA

Launches of neither first Soviet Sputniks nor American Explorer and Vanguard drew any diplomatic protests about space vehicles flying over sovereign territories. The principle of the freedom of space for satellites has thus been accepted in practice. The American satellite reconnaissance program, the primary space objective of President Eisenhower, had the road cleared for implementation.

Several special interest groups pushed for a more aggressive space agenda in the United States. One such group included government and industrial scientists and managers with the vision of strong American military presence in space in order to fight and win the battles of the Cold War. Another “pressure” group consisted of university and government scientists interested in space exploration with the experience in high-altitude sounding-rocket research, coordinated for years by the Upper Atmosphere Rocket Research Panel. The members of this group had a growing appetite for more sophisticated and expensive space experiments. Yet another lobbying group comprised spaceflight enthusiasts in government, universities, and professional societies, who passionately advocated manned spaceflight, space stations, colonization of the moon, travel to planets, and other wonderful futuristic ideas leading, ultimately, to interstellar travel.

Space advocates had limited success in advancing their agenda so far although Eisenhower unambiguously supported measured progress in space technology. The Republican president stayed focused on a clearly defined goal of meeting national security objectives in space while containing expenses. The

**Freedom  
of Space  
Accepted**

**Emerging  
Space  
Lobby**

**page 375**