

(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF



MEMORANDUM FOR DR. FLAK [REDACTED]

VIA: [REDACTED] AND MR. [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: CORONA ASSOCIATED SPACE DEBRIS

We have investigated two reportings of space debris impact from the standpoint of possible association with the orbital decay of the Corona Mission 1041 Agena, estimated by NORAD to have occurred at 1249Z, 13 July + or - 5 minutes at 93.8°W-43.3°N (approximately Detroit, Michigan). You will recall my memorandum to you of 17 July (see Tab A) related to this subject.

The "space debris" reported to have impacted near Detroit, which was the subject of Detroit newspaper articles on 14 July, has been determined to have been an escape hatch from a lightweight, private aircraft, probably of North American manufacture (see Tab B including photograph). Why the Detroit Free Press assumed that this object was space program associated on the very day that NORAD had predicted decay of Corona 1041 Agena in the vicinity of Detroit, I regret, completely escapes my comprehension.

We also investigated the possibility that space debris reported to have fallen near Chilon, State of Chiapas, Mexico (see Tab C) might also have been associated with the 1041 orbital decay event. A subsequent report describes this object as a metal sphere, apparently titanium, designed to contain gas under pressure, approximately two feet in diameter, fifty-two inches in circumference. Whereas this might be: (1) a nitrogen freon gas bottle associated with agena stabilization or (2) a helium gas bottle associated with agena engine pressurization, it is more probably a titanium gas storage sphere from a Titan III C upper stage, which re-entered on 7 February 1967 after launching seven communications satellites. A similar object discovered 7 February near Monterrey, Mexico has already been returned

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to the United States. There is in fact some question based upon reports received related to the more recent object, as to whether impact was actually observed on 13 July or whether the object was merely found on that date. It is interesting to note however that both the object discovered in February and the object discovered in July show evidences of having been subjected to technical examination and analysis, apparently by the Government of Mexico.

As an additional item for your information, the agena associated with Corona mission 1042 was predicted by NORAD for orbital decay at 0121Z 20 July + or - two minutes at 68°N-315°E (West Coast of Greenland, See Tab D). There was visual confirmation of the re-entry by four commercial aircraft. This office took no action with respect to this event and there have been no subsequent reports.

Recommendation: No action is required. This is merely for your information.



Asst for Security
NRO Staff

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(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

14 00040440D

17 July 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: CORONA Mission #1041/Impact of Debris near Detroit

Impact prediction by NORAD for CORONA Mission 1041 debris (AGENA) was placed at 93.8°W - 43.3°N ± 5 minutes (see attached TIP message and map).

The Detroit Free Press contacted NASA on 13 July inquiring about the possible origin of debris (apparently space program associated) located near Detroit. NASA representative Leo ABERNATHY, after checking with NORAD, advised them that it was not NASA associated but that NORAD had predicted decay of debris associated with a DOD space activity in that approximate area. The Detroit newspapers of 14 July apparently carried some coverage of the event. Thus far no news inquiry has been made of the DOD.

No information was available locally to provide a description of the debris or to indicate in whose custody the debris was being held except that the source of the Detroit Free Press had been someone in the Science Dept of Wayne University.

Through DIAXX, we suggested that the 1127th, Det 1 (Project MOONDUST monitors) people follow up on the Wayne University lead to arrange for FTD personnel to examine the debris and feed back a description. We are currently awaiting their report.

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