

~~SECRET~~  
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON

STIC: MOL ✓  
Policy: MOL

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

MAR 14 1966

Dear Chairman Rivers:

The following information is provided in response to your letter of March 1 concerning the determination of the launch site for the Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL).

Because polar orbits are required, the TITAN IIIC MOL launches can be easily performed by flying south from Vandenberg Air Force Base. Flying due south from Cape Kennedy would result in the trajectory passing directly over southern Florida, and this would be totally unacceptable from range safety considerations. It is possible to go into polar orbit from Cape Kennedy by launching to the east and then making a "dog leg" maneuver to the south. This has been done on some previous TIROS (meteorological satellite) shots, each time requiring range safety exceptions and State Department approval. It is not possible to perform this maneuver without overflying Cuba and the Isthmus of Panama. The probabilities of impact and fatality are one hundred times greater in this situation than from polar launches from Vandenberg. In the case of NASA launches the concern is primarily one of danger to life and property. In the case of the MOL launch we would, in addition, be very concerned with the probability of impact and recovery of any portion of the classified payload on foreign territory.

Of primary importance is the loss in payload capacity that results from this "dog leg" maneuver to avoid southern Florida. Depending on the type of maneuver performed, the TITAN IIIC could lift 2,000 to 5,000 pounds less than the 30,000 pounds it delivers to polar orbit from Vandenberg. With this loss in payload we would be unable to carry the military mission equipment required and provide for flights of adequate duration.

The TITAN III facility from which MOL will be launched at Vandenberg Air Force Base will contain a single pad with the necessary supporting equipment. Construction will cost \$31 million (which includes the purchase of land), and the TITAN III Associated Ground Equipment (AGE) will cost \$79 million. In this connection, it should be noted that modification of Eastern Test Range facilities for the 7-segment TITAN III launches would cost \$71 million. However, current plans do not require 7-segment launches from the Eastern Test Range.

WD-570/66-1

~~SECRET~~

DOWNGRADED AT 12 YEAR INTERVALS;  
NOT AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED  
DOD DIR. 5200.10

660139

Sub 1, 4/1

~~DS 66-110207-1~~

~~SECRET~~

The TITAN III facility at Vandenberg Air Force Base, which will be capable of supporting other programs using the TITAN III class space booster as well as MOL, is part of the programmed and planned expansion of Vandenberg launch facilities involving the acquisition of the SUDDEN RANCH area. Four million dollars has been appropriated for the purpose of acquiring this property.

We would be pleased to provide you with more detail of the progress we have made on the MOL Program within the last year. It would be more informative to you if we can conduct the briefing at the SPECIAL ACCESS level. Consequently, we would prefer to brief only those Committee Members who in the past have received special briefings of this sort, and Mr. Blandford of your Committee Staff who has also received these briefings. My Legislative Liaison people are in touch with Mr. Blandford and if you feel that such a briefing would be beneficial to you and the Committee, my people will be very happy to make the arrangements.

I hope the information included in this letter will be helpful and if I can be of further assistance, please give me a call.

Sincerely,

*Harold Brown*

Honorable L. Mendel Rivers  
Chairman, Committee on  
Armed Services  
House of Representatives

~~SECRET~~