

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

Studies (AF/MOL)

MAR 25 1964

Dear John:

We have noted with considerable interest the development of plans for an MOL (Military Orbital Laboratory). While we have not as yet received a copy of the NASA-DOD agreement establishing primary responsibility for this project, we assume that Defense is, in fact, the responsible agency. Formal indication of this responsibility may facilitate coordination and provision of guidance as to foreign policy implications of the program. In the meantime, I am writing informally to suggest that public affairs handling of the MOL program will require careful attention and will involve considerable modification of the general prohibition on public release of information about military space activities (DOD Directive S-5200.13).

I am not at this time recommending any particular course of handling. However, in view of the fact that a good deal of information about the MOL has already been made public through Congressional hearings and public statements, it would clearly not be reasonable to expect that the general characteristics, purpose and success or failure of its launches will not be made public. I am, therefore, inclined to believe that most aspects of the MOL program will have to be conducted with reasonable openness. At the same time, there may be aspects which it would be preferable to put under specific restraints. In short, I believe the MOL program requires specific guidelines of its own for public affairs handling and in turn may pose particular foreign policy issues.

I hope you will be able to institute preliminary consideration of this question within the Department of Defense and get in touch with us soon to determine the best course of coordination.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Kitchen  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Politico-Military Affairs

The Honorable  
John T. McNaughton,  
Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs,  
Department of Defense.

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