

(S)D/NRO BRIEFING OF PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN
INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD - 2 OCT 64

Summary of Events, CORONA/J Mission
1005 Ballistic Impact in Venezuela

On 1 August 1964, the Assistant Army Attache, Caracas, was informed by a commercial photographer, San Cristobal, that a space capsule containing equipment with markings "U.S. - Secret" had been found at a point 10 kilometers from La Fria, Venezuela. The local Venezuelan Army Commander commandeered the equipment and forwarded it to the Venezuelan Army (G-2), Caracas. The equipment was turned over to the U.S. Embassy by the Venezuelan Government on 10 August.

A comparison of certain recorded equipment serial numbers with the records of the prime CORONA contractor established definitely that the space object which impacted was identical with the first recovery capsule of CORONA/J mission 1005 which was launched 27 April 1964. This satellite had malfunctioned on-orbit and normal recovery attempts were unsuccessful.

According to computation of the 6594th Test Wing, Sunnyvale, California, the satellite with recovery capsule re-entered through normal decay on 26 May 1964. At that time, the final impact prediction from that source was 79 degrees south, 147 degrees west at 0343Z plus or minus 30 minutes.

At the same time, however, SPADATS, under tasking of the (S) NRO, was checking an improved impact prediction program which, as of 1 July 1964, was established as standard method of operation for all (S) NRO space objects. This program predicted the satellite with impact travelling south to north in the general area of Venezuela. Personnel at Quito, Ecuador; Maracaibo, Venezuela; and Grand Turk were alerted to observe re-entry. Both Quito and Grand Turk reported negative sightings. Maracaibo reported sighting 5 pieces passing overhead and presumably impacting in the Caribbean area.

~~TOP SECRET~~ /CORONA

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Declassified and Released by the NRO

In Accordance with E. O. 12958

on NOV 26 1997

Following verification of the space object as CORONA associated, a special team was dispatched to Venezuela to assess the local situation and return the equipment. Equipment was returned to the U.S. 12 August and technical evaluation has been conducted.

U.S. press coverage was scant, based upon Reuters, AP, and UPI dispatches from Caracas during the period 4 - 6 August (see Atch A). Venezuelan press coverage during initial period was considerable but not sensational. A New York Herald Tribune Staff article of 7 August 1964 (see Atch B), although referring to the U.S. satellite reconnaissance program, speculated that unless the vehicle was intended for re-entry, it was unlikely that the object was a satellite at all since such objects usually burn up during re-entry.

Initial U.S. Government reaction to press inquiry was that of "looking into the matter". An unclassified statement was prepared for the Venezuelan Minister of Defense (see Atch C), and a DOD press release to be used only in the event of specific inquiry (see Atch D). The latter statement was released on 11 September in response to a query from Knight Publications, however, a monitoring of that syndicate's newspapers has disclosed no news articles concerning the incident. There appears to be no current press interest with respect to this matter.

Technical evaluation verified that the impacted equipment was the first of two scheduled mission 1005 SRV and that there had been a ballistic impact with ablative shield intact.

Evaluation disclosed no information which would shed any further light on the cause of mission failure. Film was not exposed (mission telemetry had indicated failure of camera doors to open). The film was severely damaged by re-entry heat. Evaluation did establish that SRV re-entry was as a result of normal orbit degeneration with separation from instrument fairing caused by re-entry forces. Evaluation disclosed no evidence that equipment to the aft of the SRV was not destroyed as a result of re-entry forces.

A number of non-significant parts are missing (see Atch E); there is reported to have been some pilfering of the equipment by local Venezuelan natives. It has also been noted that a transmitter previously identified from commercial photographs of the equipment which bore the classification "Secret" is missing and is believed to have been retained by the host Government.

5 Atchs

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U. S. PRESS TO DATE

REUTERS, 4 Aug

"Caracas, Venezuela, Aug 4 (Reuters)- United States experts and Venezuelan Police today examined a North American space capsule found by villagers near the Colombian Border.

"News of the discovery in the Guarimito area north of the Andean town of Cristobal was brought to Caracas by the pilot of a photo survey airplane.

"He said the villagers saw the object fall some weeks ago. They stripped the capsule of camera apparatus and other equipment.

"One villager used nylon cords to make reins for his horse.

"The capsule measures about one by two yards and bears the date Nov 24, 1963."

UPI

"Caracas Venezuela - - A 'strange object' which fell from the sky near remote Venezuelan village last month has been identified as a U.S. satellite, it was reported today.

"Two U.S. Army officers who went to the Colombian-Border village of La Fria Tuesday identified the 175-pound object as American through contract numbers on a radio set, a U.S. Embassy spokesman said."

AP, 5 Aug

"Caracas, Venezuela, Aug 5 (AP). United States military investigators yesterday headed for a remote mountain village accessible only on foot, where peasants have discovered an American space instrument package.

"Peasants found the apparatus 23 days ago and began using parachute strands for donkey harnesses. Venezuelan authorities got word of the find and notified American officials. The United States Embassy said the device fell in Tachira State, near the Colombian border. It contained cameras, radio transmitters and other scientific instruments marked secret."

ATCH A
ATCH

N.Y.
Herald
Trib.
Aug. 7
1964

IN VENEZUELA, STRANGETHING FROM THE SKY

By Stuart H. Loory
Of The Herald Tribune Staff

Military officials yesterday were awaiting the arrival in Washington of a "strange object"—a 175-pound charred mangled piece of electronics gear—that fell from the sky near the remote Venezuelan village of La Fria last month.

Reports from Caracas quote an American embassy spokesman as identifying the object as an American satellite that fell out of orbit. The spokesman said two U. S. Army officers went to the village and recovered the object. The identification was made from markings on the gear.

In Washington, a spokesman at the Civilian National Aeronautics and Space Administration said he had been told the Army was returning the object to Washington for examination.

The NASA spokesman said the object did not belong to that agency. He noted that NASA tracks every object it has in orbit and that it would have spotted anything that fell out by its absence from radar scopes and radio broadcast patterns.

The only other American agency that orbits spacecraft is the Air Force and at the Pentagon, a spokesman said he knew nothing about the vehicle. "We're checking," he said and added that the check would not be completed last night.

The Air Force, over the past several years, has orbited an undisclosed number of classified satellites. Some of them reportedly have been used to take reconnaissance photographs of the Soviet Union and otherwise conduct intelligence missions.

Yesterday's reports from Caracas said the object contained a film pack that had been exposed, when opened by local residents. It also contained two American quarters and a nickel—coins that might have been inserted by workers building the vehicle or preparing it for space flight.

Unless the vehicle was intended for re-entry, it is highly unlikely that the object is a satellite at all. Satellites normally burn up from friction as they re-enter the atmosphere, and disintegrate or vaporize.

Atch. B

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STATEMENT FOR THE VENEZUELAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE THROUGH
U.S. ATTACHE IN CARACAS.

The equipments which impacted near La Fria, Venezuela, which were returned to the U.S. Government by Venezuelan authorities have been established as being portions of a space vehicle launched from Vandenberg AFB, California, for the purpose of assisting in the development of spacecraft techniques and technology. This space vehicle was estimated to have re-entered the atmosphere through normal decay 26 May 64 in the general Caribbean area. Examination of the equipment by U.S. technicians will provide extremely valuable corroborating data re the performance of spacecraft. (Para) Cooperation rendered by the Venezuelan Government, the Venezuelan Army, Police officials, and the good citizens of Venezuela, without which this valuable data would not have been available, is greatly appreciated.

A-11 E



STATEMENT FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND/OR SAFOI:

After examination it has been determined that the portions of a space vehicle which impacted in Venezuela late in May were a part of registered satellite #22-A which was launched from Vandenberg AFB 26 April 1964 to assist in the development of spacecraft techniques and technology.

File 2



LIST OF MISSING ITEMS

1. Forebody:
 - a. 65% of the ablative material
 - b. 1 forward capsule guide
 - c. upper sections of explosive bolts.

2. Capsule:
 - a. cable cutters (ballast release)
 - b. radiation samples (undetermined number)
 - c. minalga canister contents (undetermined)
 - d. 2A14 module (arm and transfer signal distribution module)
 - e. 4A5 arm module (TM battery protection module)
 - f. TM transmitter and VCO's
 - g. TM connector plug
 - h. 50% of W2 harness

3. Aft Cover:
 - a. water seal release mechanisms (both)
 - b. water seal dimple motor harnesses (both)
 - c. re-entry valve
 - d. W4 cable (interface between capsule and forebody)
 - e. flashing light (base found on cover)

4. Most of parachute:

5. Thrust Cone: All except W1J1 and W1P1 and 10% of harness

6. Most of gold discs (retained by host natives). One disc returned.