

17 FEB 1970

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(When Filled In)

FILE INFO

REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

15 FEB 70 00 - 08z

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IMMEDIATE [REDACTED]

PRS/WCPO (CORONA) TRANS VIA TWX FAX ONLY

ATTN: [REDACTED]

SUBJ: MISSION 1109 - UTB TRACKING PROBLEMS

FILE NO.

1. AT RECENT BRIEFINGS TO [REDACTED], THE SOC AND COMIREX THE PROJECT OFFICE EXPRESSED HIGH CONFIDENCE CONCERNING THE UTB FLIGHT WITH CR-11 ON MISSION 1109. AT THE END OF THE BRIEFINGS WE HAD COMPLETED OUR TEST CYCLE WITH CR-11, HAD OBTAINED SATISFACTORY RESULTS IN THE SPECIAL SERIES OF FILM FLATNESS TESTS, AND HAD EXPERIENCED NO PROBLEMS IN THE TRACKING OF CR-11 DURING SYSTEMS TEST. THE QUAL PROGRAM ON THE UTB MODIFICATIONS HAD BEEN SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED ON CR-8, AND CR-12 HAD NEARLY COMPLETED IT'S TEST CYCLE AS A UTB SYSTEM WITH NO TRACKING PROBLEMS NOTED. IN THIS PAST WEEK A SERIES OF EVENTS HAVE OCCURRED WHICH HAVE MARKEDLY LOWERED OUR CONFIDENCE IN THE SUCCESS OF CR-11 AND HAS RAISED DOUBT THAT WE CAN, IN THE REMAINING LIFE OF THE CORONA PROGRAM, EVER REACH THE POSITION WHERE UTB SYSTEMS CAN BE LAUNCHED WITH HIGH CONFIDENCE. THE SERIES

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OF EVENTS WHICH HAVE SO DRASTICALLY AFFECTED OUR CONFIDENCE ARE:

A. CR-13 IN ITS TEST CYCLE IN EARLY FEBRUARY BEGAN TO EXPERIENCE AS YET UNEXPLAINED TRACKING PROBLEMS. THE FILM IS FOLDING OVER IN THE INTERMEDIATE ROLLER ASSEMBLY IN A WAY WHICH WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC IN FLIGHT. CR-13 IS AT A STANDSTILL IN ITS TESTING PENDING RESOLUTION OF THE DIFFICULTY. IT APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT A COMPLETE REALIGNMENT WILL BE REQUIRED.

B. CR-11 AFTER LOADING OF FLIGHT FILM ON 10 FEB EXHIBITED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS TEST HISTORY A TENDENCY ON THE NO. 2 INSTRUMENT TO CLIMB THE FLANGE OF THE GUIDE ROLLER INTO THE INTERMEDIATE ROLLER ASSEMBLY. THIS WAS INITIALLY ATTRIBUTED TO THE HIGH TENSIONS EXPERIENCED WITH AN EMPTY "A" TAKEUP, AND AFTER APPROXIMATELY 60 CYCLES THE CONDITION DISAPPEARED AS PREDICTED. THE SYSTEM WAS SHIPPED TO VAFB ON 12 FEB WITH A REQUIREMENT FOR CLOSE WATCH ON THE TRACKING DURING THE CONFIDENCE RUNS.

C. ON FRIDAY, 13 FEB, CR-12 WHICH WAS COMPLETING ITS TEST CYCLE AND BEING READIED FOR STORAGE, BEGAN SUDDENLY TO EXHIBIT TRACKING PROBLEMS ON THE NO. 1 INSTRUMENT. THE FILM CLIMBED THE NOD ROLLER AND NO EXPLANATION

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FOR THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF THE PROBLEM IS AVAILABLE.

D. ALSO ON 13 FEB CR-11'S TRACKING PROBLEM ON THE NO. 2 INSTRUMENT REAPPEARED DURING THE CONFIDENCE RUN AT [REDACTED] ON THREE OF FOUR CAMERA OPERATES THE FILM CLIMBED OVER THE FLANGE. IN ADDITION A FILM CURL PROBLEM WAS NOTED FOR THE FIRST TIME ON THE NO. 1 INSTRUMENT IN THE AREA BETWEEN THE OUTRIGGER AND THE INPUT ROLLER. POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED WITH EMULSION DRYING DURING A NITROGEN PURGE, THIS FILM CURL CONDITION WAS NEVERTHELESS MORE SEVERE THAN ANY WHICH HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN OBSERVED.

E. WITH THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE CR-11 TRACKING PROBLEM AT [REDACTED] A DECISION WAS REACHED TO SEND THE ACCEPTANCE TEAM OF THE GOVERNMENT AND CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL TO VAFB FOR A REPEAT SERIES OF TEST. THE TEST SERIES INCLUDED 12 CAMERA OPERATES AND THE FLANGE OVERRIDE WAS APPARENT ON THE FIRST APPROXIMATELY 50 PER CENT OF THE RUNS. THIS MISTRACKING WAS NOTED BOTH DURING OPERATES AND ON SHUTDOWN.

2. THE TEST PROCEDURE AT VAFB HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND THE SYSTEM READIED FOR MATING. ALL OTHER FUNCTIONS ON CR-11 HAVE PROCEEDED IN AN EXCEPTIONALY SMOOTH MANNER. MATING HAS BEEN DELAYED 24 HOURS HOWEVER TO ALLOW TIME FOR A HQ [REDACTED]

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EVALUATION OF THE STATUS, AND A DECISION ON THE LAUNCH OF MISSION 1109. THERE ARE ONLY TWO OPTIONS AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME RELATIVE TO THE LAUNCH OF MISSION 1109. EITHER MISSION 1129 CAN BE FLOWN AS A UTB MISSION WITH CR-11 AS SCHEDULED, AND THE RISK ACCEPTED THAT CATASTROPHIC FAILURE COULD RESULT AT ANY TIME IN THE MISSION; OR THE BACKUP STB SYSTEM CR-10 MUST BE READIED FOR THE LAUNCH AND THE LAUNCH DELAYED UNTIL U.E.T.

4 MARCH. IF THE DECISION IS MADE TO FLY MISSION 1109 AND A FAILURE OCCURS IT WOULD BE OBVIOUS, WE BELIEVE, THAT NO FURTHER SUCH RISKS SHOULD BE TAKEN AND THAT ALL REMAINING SYSTEMS SHOULD BE FLOWN WITH STB. IF THE DECISION IS MADE TO FLY MISSION 1109 AS AN STB MISSION WITH CR-10, THE QUESTION REMAINS AS TO WHETHER WORK WITH UTB SHOULD BE CONTINUED, OR WHETHER THE DECISION SHOULD BE MADE TO TERMINATE UTB WORK AT THIS TIME AND TO FINISH THE REMAINING EIGHT CORONA FLIGHTS AS STB MISSIONS.

3. THERE IS AT THE PRESENT TIME AN UNCERTAINTY CONCERNING THE SOLUTIONS FOR THE CR-11, CR-12 AND CR-13 SYSTEMS TRACKING PROBLEMS. THIS UNCERTAINTY IS COUPLED WITH A REDUCED AVAILABILITY OF ENGINEERING TALENT ON THE PROGRAM TO WORK

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ON FURTHER UTB MODIFICATIONS, AND THE UNDESIRABILITY OF DOING MODIFICATIONS ON SYSTEMS AT THE FIELD TEST SITE IN THE PHASEOUT PORTION OF THE PROGRAM. CONSIDERED IN TOTAL WE BELIEVE THAT IN THE INTEREST OF PROGRAM RELIABILITY THAT THE UTB DESIGN GOAL SHOULD BE DROPPED, AND THAT MISSION 1109 AND ALL REMAINING CORONA FLIGHTS SHOULD BE CONFIGURED FOR STB. WE RECOGNIZE HOWEVER THE EXTREME PRESSURE IN WASHINGTON FOR THE INCREASED COVERAGE OF UTB. WE LEAVE THE DECISION TO

4. YOUR ANSWER ON MISSION 1109 MUST BE RECEIVED NOT LATER THAN 1200 HOURS PACIFIC STANDARD TIME (1500 EST) MONDAY, 16 FEBRUARY IF A LAUNCH DATE OF 18 FEBRUARY IS TO BE MET.

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