

SSCI/DAMON

April 10 (11.2)

SSCI Recommendation

Terminate DAMON Shuttle experiment, but continue studies of alternate imaging systems.

NRO Response

DAMON is an important element in the successful transition of the NRP to the Space Shuttle. With DAMON the NRO will gain experience in areas such as security, payload integration, the Shuttle operational environment, cost sharing and cargo mixing, Shuttle scheduling, use of orbiter subsystems, and the role of the payload specialist. It is important to learn these lessons early, on an experiment, rather than on critical payloads

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

DAMON has already provided important contributions. It has demonstrated the feasibility of a 27-month STS integration vice the previous 48-month plan. It has forced the identification of roles and responsibilities in NASA and DoD organizations and successful payload operations on early STS flights has been significantly enhanced by DAMON's pioneering efforts. In the technical integration area, DAMON is forcing consideration of issues on orbiter performance capability, details of cargo bay configuration, payload processing procedures, and the perennial pricing issue. DAMON is beginning to evolve a meaningful role for the astronauts in a reconnaissance mission.

In addition, DAMON will provide a valuable additional operational intelligence capability to supplement the capability of HEXAGON and

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(b)(1)

(b)(3)

One DAMON mission is approximately equal to one quarter of a HEXAGON mission. Finally, the DAMON program will preserve an option to grow to an operational film-based imaging system utilizing the Shuttle to provide backup and complementary collection capability on a permanent basis.

In summary, DAMON should be continued. The valuable lessons learned are well worth DAMON's cost. Shuttle delays, even rather significant ones, would not change our need to fly the DAMON experiment on an early Shuttle flight.

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