



CONFIDENTIAL

**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.**

**Mr. Donald W. Douglas, Jr.
Douglas Aircraft Company
3000 Ocean Park Boulevard
Santa Monica, California**

Dear Mr. Douglas

The failure of the booster on Discoverer 27 is causing me great concern. The Thor booster should be the most reliable of all the U.S. boosters and it seems to me that failures due to human error should be at the absolute minimum by this time. I understand that a faulty application of adequate procedures of recording changes resulted in a wiring error, and that the circuitry check procedure failed to isolate the error that caused the booster failure.

These experiments are of the highest importance to the nation in support of the space program. It is absolutely unacceptable that this type of failure should obstruct our progress. Douglas Aircraft Company, as a major Department of Defense contractor, must deal promptly and severely with this case of deviation from procedures in order that it does not reflect in future negotiations on other Department of Defense contracts.

Please inform me at your earliest convenience of the actions you have taken to prevent similar recurrences.

Robert S. McNamara

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Major Howard

Code Ext
185-2251

TWX, 7 Aug,

"You know systems and number".

Mr. Donald W. Douglas, Jr.
Douglas Aircraft Company

"It is most unfortunate that one of our important launches was marred by an unauthorized or incorrectly recorded DAC wired change. I cannot understand why the plug was not wired to conform to the other plug nor why the circuitry check procedure failed to isolate this anomaly. It appears to me that in both instances there were unauthorized deviations from procedures established to prevent such an occurrence. I am sure that you take particular pains to establish procedures to eliminate human errors. Deviations from these procedures must be dealt with promptly and severely. Personnel must be impressed with the importance of established procedures. I would like to be briefed at your earliest convenience on what you have done in this particular case and what you are doing to prevent similar reoccurrences."

/s/ General Schreiber

Any questions, please call [REDACTED]

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Sec-5-1N

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
Washington

14 August 1961

Dear Mr. Douglas:

The Air Force has reported that the failure of the THOR booster on DISCOVERER XXVII was due to contractor error. It is my understanding that there was a wiring error and that the circuit recheck procedure was inadequate to isolate the error which subsequently led to booster failure.

I take the most serious view of malfunctions which appear to be due to inadequate supervision and lack of proper controls on the part of the responsible contractor. Not only have the Services been asked to act promptly to correct such conditions, but they have also been instructed to give consideration to the contractor's performance record in future negotiations.

Please inform me of your analysis of the cause of the DISCOVERER failure and the action you have taken to prevent a recurrence.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

Robert S. McNamara

Mr. Donald W. Douglas, Jr.
Douglas Aircraft Company
3000 Ocean Park Boulevard
Santa Monica, California

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SecDef Cont. No. C-847

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