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MOL INFORMATION POLICY NOT TO BE AFFECTED BY ANY U.S.-SOVIET ACCORDS

Information policy for the Air Force Manned Orbiting Laboratory program will be set for each launch, according to the Defense Department, and as best as can be determined will not be affected by any agreements regarding space between the Soviet Union and the United States.

According to DOD, the general information policy for MOL requires the Air Force to set forth specific information plans for each launch. The first information decision made concerning the program was the open coverage accorded the naming of MOL astronauts.

Since then, it has also been decided that the first heat shield qualification test launch Oct. 28 at Cape Kennedy will be open to the press. According to one informed source, it would follow that other launches made from Cape Kennedy would also be open to the public.

But, the Air Force says that its instructions are to come up with an information policy for each launch. It said that follow-on launches to the Oct. 28 launch could be closed, open or partially closed.

It has been said that MOL information policy is, or will be affected by agreements reached in the United Nations with regard to space.

But Dr. Edward C. Welsh, executive secretary of the National Aeronautics and Space Council, said that MOL is not affected by current U.N. agreements. He told M/S DAILY that the agreements concern the existence of weapons of mass destruction in space. MOL, Welsh said, is not a weapons system.

The possibility has also been mentioned of a treaty on space sovereignty being negotiated in Geneva between the U.S. and Russia having an effect on MOL information policy.

According to one report, the articles state in part: "The parties to the treaty shall carry on activities in the exploration and use of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, in accordance with international law, including the charter of the United Nations, in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation and understanding."

Some Air Force people see the reported U.S.-Soviet article not affecting MOL information policy because of the distinction between outer and inner space. They believe that the agreement as reported does not cover near earth orbit.

But, Welsh said, "Our treaty proposal does not make a distinction between near and outer space."