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FACT SHEET

MANNED ORBITING LABORATORY (MOL) PROGRAM

Chronology

On December 10, 1963, the Secretary of Defense announced the assignment of a space station development program to the Air Force to determine the usefulness of man in space for defense purposes. He identified it as a "manned orbiting laboratory." Both in-house and industry studies were undertaken on various concepts and design proposals for the MOL.

The program was broadened in January, ~~1963~~ 1965, to include development of technology to improve the capabilities for manned and unmanned experimentation. Requests for Proposals (RFPs) were issued for design studies to assist in developing cost and technical information required to proceed with full scale development of the MOL.

Four contractors were selected in March, 1965, to perform preliminary design studies for the MOL vehicle.

The Air Force presented a program proposal to the Secretary of Defense who later recommended approval to the President, after discussions with the Vice President and members of the Space Council. The President instructed DOD to proceed with the program on August 25.

The Air Force selected Douglas Aircraft Company to design and build the laboratory in which the men will live and work. General Electric Company was selected to work on the task of experiment integration.

On August 31, the Secretary of the Air Force designated General Bernard A. Schriever as Director of the Manned Orbiting Laboratory Program--in addition to his duties as Commander, Air Force Systems Command. Brigadier General Harry L. Evans was named Vice Director of the program, and Brigadier General Russell A. Berg was assigned as Deputy Program Director in charge of the MOL Systems Office located in Los Angeles, Calif.

The first eight out of a planned total of 20 aerospace research pilots were assigned to the program on November 12, 1965.

Program Plan

The primary objectives of the MOL program are to:

- Learn more about what man is able to do in space and how that ability relates to the defense of the nation.
- Develop technology and equipment which will help manned and

unmanned space flight, and to experiment with this technology and equipment.

The MOL aerospace research pilots will be launched into space inside a modified Gemini spacecraft by a Titan III booster. Once in orbit, they will enter the laboratory attached to the spacecraft through a hatch in the heat shield.

The laboratory will be designed to allow them to work in a "shirt-sleeve" environment--that is, without space suits--for up to 30 days. For return to earth they will go back into the Gemini spacecraft, detach the laboratory and re-enter the atmosphere for an ocean landing and pickup.

The initial unmanned launch of a fully-equipped MOL is scheduled for 1968. This will be followed later that year by the first of five flights with two-man crews.

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