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25 Sep 1964

Dear Jim:

As you know, the Air Force effort on the MOL program during the last several months has been directed at determining the most significant military and scientific experiments to be performed and to define more fully the configuration to be flown. This appears the best approach if the MOL is viewed (as I view it) as a necessary precursor to an operational space station should it later be determined that such is required. DOD has obligated \$5.5 million on this program thus far and we have budgeted \$33 million for FY 1965. Our commitment for FY 1966 is being studied but it obviously may be much larger.

It is my understanding that your staff have been studying a configuration called APOLLO X planned as a possible forerunner to a National Space Station. I am also informed that NASA may tentatively plan to devote an appreciable amount to studies having a bearing on this matter in FY 1965, continuing an effort of approximately \$12 million committed to space station studies and related programs in FY 1964 and 1965.

I know that we both feel, because of the important leverage they exert on subsequent programs of potentially enormous size, that studies in the area of manned earth orbit research and development should be carefully controlled, and that the purpose of our joint agreement of August 1963 is to achieve the necessary control. Of course, as studies progress and become more closely associated with particular configurations, joint control may become more difficult to achieve.

In view of the very large expenditures which would be involved in a National Space Station, its possible significance to national security as well as its importance to the country as a predecessor to manned planetary exploration, it seems to me that it may be timely to consider how we might jointly manage our programs that lead in this direction. In fact, I see little reason for two separate large programs. Therefore, I will appreciate your consideration of a management plan such as the following to consolidate our joint work toward an operational or scientific space station:

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1. DOD and NASA will agree that the MOL is the flight fore-runner to the definition of a scientific or military operational space station.
2. NASA will accept the responsibility of manager of the scientific program to be carried out using the MOL. All such scientific experiments (except those that may be classified for security purposes) will be selected, developed, and analyzed by NASA. The funding for this work will be provided by NASA. Our planning indicates that substantial weight and volume can be made available in the MOL after accommodation of particular classified experiments. In addition, we would be prepared to consider variations in MOL configuration for specific scientific purposes on particular flights of the program.
3. The Air Force will continue as operating manager of the program.
4. The coordination of the program will be carried out by a DOD-NASA board set up similar to the Gemini Program Planning Board.
5. Following the flight results from the MOL, a determination will be made on (1) the necessity for and nature of a new large military operational or scientific space station, (2) the extent to which both scientific and defense needs might be cast by a single operational program, and (3) the agency of the government that should carry the development responsibility.

I would also like you to know that I am prepared to ask the Air Force to take certain action in order to move more rapidly toward manned flight of the MOL. In particular, I am considering a plan employing certain of the TITAN III R&D flights to prove interfaces between the MOL and the launch vehicle. With similar objectives, I believe it would also be helpful if NASA and DOD could work out means whereby two of the stock of GEMINI vehicles could be assigned to TITAN III R&D launches.

I know that this approach will have your serious consideration and I hope that we can reflect our joint planning into the FY 1966 budget.

Sincerely,

S/Robert S. McNamara

Honorable James E. Webb
Administrator
National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

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