

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION  
1520 H STREET NORTHWEST  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

20 October 1959

The President  
The White House



Dear Mr. President:

I have joined with the Secretary of Defense in submitting to you a recommendation for the transfer to NASA of the Development Operations Division of the Army Ballistic Missile Agency. I have done this in the belief that the nation's interests in space research and development will best be served by this action. It will tend to further concentrate responsibility for our program of scientific research and exploration in the civilian agency established in response to your request to the Congress in early 1958.

As you know, Mr. President, I have long been concerned about the "rate and scale" of our non-military space effort. After much serious thought and many discussions with others, both within and without the government, I now hold firmly the opinion that the United States cannot withdraw from the contest for significant progress in scientific research in space and in the exploration and exploitation of space for purposes beneficial to mankind. But I am equally certain that we must develop and adhere to our own vigorous program rather than compete on a shot-for-shot basis with the USSR.

It seems clear that increasing levels of funding will be necessary, particularly for the next few years, if we are to pursue such a vigorous program. This is occasioned, to a considerable extent, by the fact that rocket booster systems necessary to carry out increasingly difficult experiments in space and to provide ultimately for manned exploration of outer space and the nearby celestial bodies are costly to develop. It will be our purpose, ultimately, to center in the group transferred from ABMA to NASA the bulk of the management responsibility for our effort in the space vehicle development field.

It would be unprofitable and unwise to develop these space vehicle systems without carrying on at the same time a vigorous

program of research and development on payloads necessary to exploit the propulsion capabilities to be provided. Our ultimate progress in this field will surely be limited seriously if we fail to carry on in the interim a solid program of scientific research utilizing whatever propulsion systems may be available to us. I have said consistently that the annual cost of a sensible, hard-hitting program--not a "crash" program--will become one billion or more dollars per year within the next few years. I have no present reason for changing this estimate.

It is my understanding that the Department of Defense proposes to provide 140 millions in FY 1961 to ABMA for the support of the Saturn booster program and that that sum would be transferred to NASA along with the project. Consonant with the thoughts expressed in the paragraph immediately above, NASA has submitted a budget request for 783 million dollars for FY 1961. Adding the 140 millions to our 783 millions would bring us to a total of 923 millions. It is my estimate that we could effect savings of perhaps as much as 75 millions by consolidation of our work effort as a result of the proposed transfer. If my estimate is valid, an appropriation of 850 millions should suffice for FY 1961.

While I realize that this is not the time nor the place to debate budgetary figures, I am sure you would want my best estimate of the situation as I see it. In my opinion, it would compound rather than move toward a solution of our problems in the space field to transfer ABMA to NASA and agree upon the need to prosecute a super booster program without provision for adequate support of the non-military space program in substantially the amount suggested above.

Thank you for hearing me out.

Sincerely,

  
T. Keith Glennan  
Administrator

