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letter	James E. Webb to Dean Rusk (CONFIDENTIAL) OPEN # NW 79615, 12/19/24	3/14/62	A

FILE LOCATION

Pre-Presidential Confidential File
[Vice Presidential] ["Flight" Magazine Criticism of US Launch Secrecy]

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IN REPLY REFER TO

March 15, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. James E. Webb

Subject: "Flight" Magazine Criticism of US Launch Secrecy.

Based on news reports, it would appear that the subject article was prompted by a seeming discrepancy between the obvious intent of UN registration of launches and the fact that certain DOD launches are noted in the press as secret.

The intent of UN registration as viewed by the public must be presumed to include the desire to demonstrate the openness of US space activities. The magazine has apparently concluded that reports of "secret" launchings are inconsistent with this intent.

It should be noted that the article was undoubtedly written without knowledge of the US registration of launches with the UN on March 5. However, the editors will undoubtedly consider that their view is substantiated if the present criteria for US registration continue to be applied inasmuch as these criteria would exclude from the registration certain launches which nevertheless may be expected to be noted in the press.

The US registration already made was simply an inventory of objects still in orbit. It is to be supplemented every two weeks with the addition of such launchings as may be registered under the criteria now applied. The excluding factor in these criteria appears to be the requirement that objects achieve "sustained" orbit. While this has not been precisely defined, it would permit the omission from registrations of satellites in brief orbit (including not only "secret" launches but also the Glenn flight) although these may, as stated above, be expected to be reported in the press.

My own conclusion would be that the Flight magazine criticism may be expected to be repeated far more widely and on even better grounds if we persist in using the present criteria.

AWF
Arnold W. Frutkin
Director, Office of
International Programs

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MAR 14 1962

The Honorable
Dean Rusk
Secretary of State

My dear Mr. Rusk:

While I appreciate the considerations which have determined the character of our registration of space launchings with the United Nations, the ground rules as currently understood appear to me to contain within them a potential for serious embarrassment to the United States.

The criteria for listing launchings exclude satellites which orbit only a few times. This has been taken to mean that our registrations would exclude the recent Glenn flight as well as certain Department of Defense launchings which are classified but which so far have been regularly noted in the press.

Clearly, omissions such as the above would invite press comment questioning the completeness and good faith of the American registrations. Moreover, the conventional assignment of Greek letters to all satellites requires either (1) the reservation of certain letters for classified satellites with the result that these letters would be noticeably missing from our listings, or (2) the assignment of all letters to listed satellites, risking charges of deliberate concealment if unlisted satellites are then reported in the press or are observed by friendly or unfriendly countries.

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It would appear to be in the national interest that current criteria be reviewed in order to arrive at standards which permit at least as much openness as manifested in the press. For the present, we are providing an up-dating of the US registration which includes the Glenn launch and all available information from the Department of Defense.

Sincerely yours,

Original Signed By
James E. Webb

James E. Webb
Administrator

Prep: AWFrutkin:dcg/3-14-62
AI, Chron, RF
A, BAC

cc: Rarley/Packard

WJ AD
WJ 3/4 AI

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