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A&M SATELLITE TRACKING STATION
Jerrel B. Jones, left, and Glenn Gausted inspect instruments

Tracking Station Awaits Launch

A&M University's satellite tracking station awaits launching of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's S-66 ionospheric satellite.

The device will zoom skyward soon from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

Data transmitted by the special ionospheric polar beacon satellite will be received by an A&M research group headed by Dr. John J. German, electrical engineering professor. He is assisted by graduate students Glenn Gausted of College Station and Wayne F. Wilson of Cushing.

JERREL B. JONES, assistant professor of electrical engineering, has helped the group make preparations. German said data will be obtained by special antennas mounted on top of Bolton Hall and by receiving and recording equipment in the building.

"A&M's IBM 709 computer will be used in the work," German said. "Signal amplitude and time will be auto-correlated during tracking with aid of the computer. The A&M team is to be advised of the satellite's position in its first orbit so that it can begin tracking."

A&M IS PARTICIPATING through its Texas Engineering Experiment Station and is one of 54 institutions in the receiving network of the S-66. Eleven are in the United States. The other 43 are scattered throughout the world.

German said NASA is using the S-66 to collect data for Faraday rotation studies (to provide integrated electron content), for scintillation studies (information on size and shape of ionospheric irregularities), and doppler studies (orbital and electron content information).

"THE TEXAS A&M GROUP has already been receiving data from many of the 200 satellites now in orbit," the professor explained, "and has been able to adapt and improve its equipment for greatest effectiveness for the S-66 program."

He said the S-66 is capable of information on geographical extent of regions of irregularities without confusion due to daily effects. The satellite's blazing speed is the reason. "In addition, the fact that a satellite commonly changes height in its passage across the sky can give information on the height of the irregularities, German pointed out.

The S-66 will pass over the North Pole during orbit.

In future work, the A&M group hopes to operate with two fixed stations and a mobile unit, German said.

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