

the nation

Skylab drop closer, entry expected soon

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Skylab has dropped to within 137 miles of Earth in its steady descent toward a fiery plunge into the atmosphere between July 10 and 14.

The space agency reported Thursday July 12 still is the most likely date for the 77-ton space station's demise.

The orbiting laboratory's 89-minute path around Earth ranged from 137 to 148.5 miles Tuesday.

The descent is caused by the increasing drag from the thin upper fringes of Earth's atmosphere. As Skylab drops lower, the drag increases and its descent becomes more rapid.

When the space station reaches an altitude of about 80 miles, it no longer will be going fast enough to remain in orbit.

Skylab will break apart when it hits the atmosphere. An estimated 500 pieces capable of causing injury will hit the Earth, falling along a 4,000-mile-long belt 100 miles wide.

A 'common heritage of mankind'
U.N. committee declares moon belongs to all

United Press International
UNITED NATIONS — If you're looking for oil, gold or real estate, don't go to the moon. It's no longer up for grabs.

The United Nation's 47-nation Outer Space Committee Tuesday proclaimed the moon and all its resources a "common heritage of mankind."

Whatever is found there in terms of minerals or other loot must be shared on a global basis under the supervision of an international regime, except for minor samples the finder may keep or share with others.

The same goes for Mars, Jupiter, Venus and all other celestial bodies within our solar system, except for planet Earth where private property and national boundaries are upheld.

After years of haggling, the committee approved an 11-article legal code to regulate future space exploration.

The "Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies," abbreviated simply as the "Moon Treaty," must be approved by the next U.N. General Assembly. It will have to be ratified by at least five U.N. members to go into effect, which is certain since 47 delegations, including the United States and the Soviet Union, have accepted it.

It sets up basic rules for the time when astronauts from various countries flock to the moon in a multitude of space vehicles, setting up research stations and digging into its surface.

The treaty thus proclaims the right of all states to:
— Land their space objects on the moon and launch them from the moon;

— Place their personnel, space vehicles, equipment, facilities, stations and installations anywhere on or below the surface of the moon;

— Establish manned and unmanned stations on the moon.

In non-legalistic terms, the treaty says:
— Thou shalt not use the moon for war by importing nuclear weapons, establishing military bases, fortifications or weapons testing stations;

— Thou shalt not dump space garbage on the moon, in particular radioactive materials, nor otherwise contaminate its environment;

— Thou shalt not interfere with other countries' research activities, their space vehicles and astronauts, nor block access to any particular area of the moon.

The committee also decided to convene an international space conference in August 1982, with the site still to be decided.

The agreement is the fifth space treaty concluded under U.N. auspices. Others in force are the 1967 treaty on principles governing activities in outer space, the 1968 agreement on the rescue of astronauts and the return of space objects, the 1972 convention on liability for damage caused by space objects — which may be invoked in case of Skylab damage — and the 1976 convention on the registration of objects launched into outer space.

Michigan governor tells of visit to bombing site

United Press International
LANSING, Mich. — It was a strange experience to stand on the ground in a city I helped bomb more than a quarter century ago.

And it was stranger still to talk to the mayor of that town, a man who once worked in an armaments plant our bombs destroyed.

This happened last week when I stopped in Ploiesti, Romania, to visit a factory that is doing business with Michigan and other U.S. companies.

Ploiesti, because of the importance of its oil fields to the Germans, was one of the targets most heavily bombed by American planes — and one of the targets most heavily defended.

Within three days of leaving the United States to become a B-24 waistgunner, I flew my first mission over Ploiesti. And I returned twice more. It was considered the most dangerous target in Europe — not because of fighters, but because of flak. On my first mission there, about a third of the 28 planes on that mission were shot down.

On one strike before I arrived, an armada of 177 B-24s, each carrying nearly 5,000 pounds of bombs, flew over Ploiesti. More than 50 never returned, having been hit by about the heaviest concentration of anti-aircraft power in all of Europe.

Before the war was over, 70 percent of Ploiesti was destroyed.

In short, Ploiesti has special meaning for those who served in the air and on the ground in World War II and it was with some hesitation that I told Mayor Paraschiv:

"I flew over here three times — I'm sorry to say."

The mayor replied:

"Nobody was guilty, neither you nor us."

We both agreed the important thing is that was not repeated.

Romania had a unique role in World War II. It switched sides. In June of 1941, it entered on the side of the Axis powers and suffered more than 300,000 deaths. In 1944, following a communist-supported coup, it entered the war on the side of the Allies against the Germans in Transylvania, Hungary, and

Czechoslovakia. It then lost more than 100,000 more lives.

The mayor, a welder who helped make arms for the Germans, is now a leader in the Communist Party of an important city in a country that is a maverick within the Soviet bloc — and one interested in increased trade with the United States.

As the mayor stood outside the factory, talking to a governor who once helped bomb his city, he spoke little about the past and much about the future. He spoke especially of industrialization and housing programs for his country. New apartment buildings were going up all around the factory, which was built with American help and is located right next to the site of the armaments plant American bombs destroyed.

I probably will not see the mayor or his city again. But I will never forget, either.

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