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Production of air-defense gun scuttled

Associated Press
 WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger said Tuesday he was scuttling production of a new air-defense gun on which the Army has sunk \$1.8 billion, because it doesn't work much better than the weapons the service has now.

Before Weinberger's decision, the Army had planned to spend another \$3 billion on the weapon, a twin-cannon gun unit mounted atop a tank chassis and known formally as the Division Air Defense gun or Divad.

"The independent operational tests demonstrated that the system's performance does not effectively meet the growing (Soviet) military threat," Weinberger said.

"The tests demonstrated also that while there are marginal improvements that can be made to the Divad, these are not significant compared to the capability of current air defense weapons and therefore, not worth the additional cost," he said.

The cancellation of a weapon program, particularly after production has begun, is rare.

Although the Sgt. York has been plagued with development problems almost from its inception, Weinberger's decision "caught many Army leaders by surprise."

They had argued privately the weapon was worth preserving because additional improvements could be made, and that the Army needed a radar-directed gun that could operate at night and in bad weather.

The Sgt. York has been under development for more than seven years. The Ford Aerospace & Communications Corp. received a contract in 1981 to supply up to 618 Divad units. The company, which assembles the Sgt. York at a plant in Newport Beach, Calif., had delivered 65. Weinberger said he had ordered the Army not to accept any more of the guns.

Ford Aerospace said Tuesday the Sgt. York had met the "contractual specification requirements established by the Army." The firm also suggested it might offer a replacement itself.

Designed to protect armored columns and troops from air attack, the Sgt. York consists of two 40 mm cannon — mounted atop a modified M48 tank chassis — linked to a special computer and radar.

What's up

Friday
 MSC Travel Committee is showing the film "We've Never Been Licked" in Rudder Auditorium at 8:30 p.m.

Sunday
 TAMU International Folk Dance Club is meeting in 226 MSC from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Monday
 Off-Campus Aggies will hold a spirit rally for off-campus students at the Grove at 5:30 p.m.

International-Recreational Sports will hold an orientational meeting for flag football and 16-inch softball officials.
Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no less than three days prior to desired publication date.

Discovery launched despite foul weather

Associated Press
 CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Discovery's astronauts were launched Tuesday through the worst weather of the space shuttle program, then had to rush the release of an Australian satellite to keep it from broiling in the sun.

"Fantastic," Mission Control said after the Aussat satellite was deployed a day ahead of schedule. We all breathed a sigh of relief down here."

"You think you did!" exclaimed astronaut Mike Lounge with emphasis on the second "you."

NASA also decided to go ahead with the scheduled release later in the day of another satellite, for the American Satellite Co. It would be the first time in the shuttle program that two satellites were released on a single day.

The Australian payload, one of three satellites carried aloft in Discovery's cargo bay, had been scheduled for launch Wednesday but a damaged sunshield forced the early release.

The frame-and-fabric device was supposed to close like a clamshell over the satellite in the cargo bay until deployment time, but it hung up in the half-way position as it was opened for a satellite health check. Lounge then guided the ship's 50-foot robot arm to push it out of the way, leaving the satellite exposed.

"The Aussat satellite would have considerable difficulty in the cargo bay unprotected by a sunshield from the cold of deep space or from direct solar radiation," Mission Control's

Brian Welch said. "The satellite has a very limited lifetime in the bay, perhaps only a few more orbits and at that point it would have serious problems."

Once in orbit, satellites rotate constantly like meat on a barbecue spit, preventing any portion from overheating or getting too cold.

After back-to-back scrubs Saturday and Sunday, tense launch officials gambled on a break in the clouds and sent Discovery on its eight-day mission with a spectacular liftoff that colored the clouds red, white and orange. Soon after the liftoff, the pad was obscured by a torrential downpour.

"Thanks for getting us up here," said commander Joe Engle as the launch control team's shift ended. "Don't worry about this other little stuff. We'll get it solved."

The sunshield frame may have been bent out of shape by being hit with a television camera on the shuttle arm elbow. Flight Director Gary Coen said the cause had not been determined and he did not know if a crew member had been at fault.

The Aussat satellite is the first of three intended to provide television and other communications to the entire Australian continent, its offshore islands and Papua New Guinea.

Although the rescue of the \$85 million Syncom communications satellite is the glamour part of the flight, the release of the trio of satellites for paying customers has higher priority and a \$40 million delivery fee.

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