

Opinion

NASA's space race hurdles

NASA's current deluge of problems couldn't have come at a more critical moment in the space race. While the American shuttle program has been put on hold until 1988, the Soviet Union and China are on the verge of major scientific advancements in space exploration.

NASA's troubles go beyond the grounding of the space shuttle. The House Armed Services Committee plans to cut \$550 million from the shuttle's military operations budget. The space agency also has shelved its journalist-in-space program, with some officials predicting it could be 10 years before another civilian makes a space flight. As if those setbacks weren't enough, the widow of Challenger pilot Michael Smith has filed a \$15.1 million wrongful-death suit against NASA. Smith claims her husband knew his fate seconds before the explosion, despite restored tapes of the crew's conversation to the contrary. Other lawsuits from astronauts' families are expected to follow.

Meanwhile, NASA's toughest competition, the Soviet Union, is making great strides. Two cosmonauts returned to Earth July 16 after spending four months in orbit. The Russians' latest accomplishment, the Mir space station, is

expected to be the building block for future projects, such as space-based factories, laboratories and repair complexes. During their stay in Mir, the cosmonauts were supplied with food by two unmanned spaceships — the first time this has been done. In addition, they made an intra-orbit trip to the older Salyut-7 station, another first.

China also has been making giant leaps for mankind, announcing that it plans to offer commercial launches for foreign satellites aboard the Long March rocket. The proposal has drawn favorable responses from dozens of nations, including pride-swallowing inquiries from the United States. At least some of these revenues could have been accrued by NASA if the shuttle were operational.

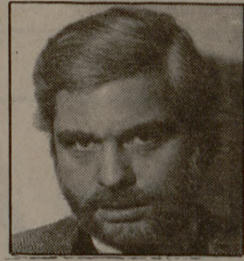
NASA has enjoyed a lead in the space race almost from the word go. But the other contenders rapidly are closing the gap by capitalizing on our careless handling of the shuttle program.

Let's hope NASA can pick up the pace and get back in the running. We can't afford another episode of hare-like carelessness. Our rivals are not moving at a turtle's pace.

The Battalion Editorial Board

'Click' solutions have remote possibilities

The Click family was at home. It was sometime in the future and the family had a remote-control unit for every appliance in the house. They called it the clicker. The clicker controlled the television set, the hi-fi and the videocassette recorder. The person who held it was very powerful indeed. Then one night something happened. Click.



Richard Cohen

The Click family was having its usual fight over who would control the television set. Alex Click, the son, held the clicker in his hands and would change the channels when he wanted. He would also mute commercials, which was annoying to other members of his family who thought that commercials were the best things on television. Daddy Click complained and so did Mommy Click. Alex Click, as usual, just ignored them. Daddy Click rose from his chair and strode over to Alex in a menacing fashion. Alex Click aimed the clicker at his father. Click.

Daddy Click froze in place. "What have you done?" Mommy Click asked in alarm. Alex Click looked down at the clicker and just smiled. "You have muted your father," Mommy Click cried. "Hit the button and release him or I'm going to send you right to bed." Alex Click aimed the clicker at her. Click. She was silent.

Alex Click was excited. He was just 10 years old and felt very powerful. He usually felt powerful when he controlled the clicker, but this was something special. He got up from the chair and went to the window. Outside, a garbage truck was grinding away. Alex Click aimed the clicker at it. Click. It was silent. Alex went downstairs. He aimed the clicker at the toaster and, after a while, it popped. He opened the refrigerator door that way and started the blender. Then he pointed the clicker at a plant and it drooped over. He knew that if he ever unmuted his parents, he would get hell for that.

Alex Click went out into the street. He started his father's car with the clicker. He had never driven before, but he had grown up watching "The Dukes of Hazzard," so he climbed in through the window and drove off. He got to an intersection and had to stop for a red light. He aimed the clicker at it. Click. It went green. A

cop looked in amazement, but Alex smiled and aimed the clicker at him. The cop ducked and Alex roared.

Alex Click went to see the U.S. Supreme Court. He aimed the clicker at the port of a negligence lawyer who had argued that President Reagan had nominated a justice to the court of appeals. From the gallery, Alex aimed his clicker. Helms froze in sentence. Most of the Senate applauded, but Vice President George Bush, sitting next to Alex, pressed the "candor" button and denounced the Reagan economic program, admitted he was confused about the abortion and then left to change his watchband while the Senate laughed.

Alex Click left the Senate. He aimed the clicker at a bank machine, aimed the clicker at a television set and got enough money to fly to Hollywood. He went to the singles bar where everyone was about to get plastic surgery to make them look 35. The place was full of youthful people talking about Medicare and constipation. Alex aimed the clicker at them and in a flash everyone was silent. Alex was awed.

Then he went to a movie where he found Sylvester Stallone filming a scene in which he jumps out of a helicopter and kills people for free. Alex clicked him frozen and alone started to cry. Alex laughed.

Alex had a good time in Hollywood. He shut up Charlton Heston, Helms and Sean Penn at a cocktail party, asked a question and left him frozen in eternity with his fist cocked. Alex went to New York and shut up Ed Bradley. That took two clicks and a fresh batch of people carrying ghetto-blasters and motorists who were driving with their radios on top volume.

Alex Click returned to Washington. He went to a presidential press conference and clicked the president in the middle of a sentence. The president made gestures, shrugged his shoulders and no one noticed that he was not doing anything. Later, Larry Speakes said what the president meant to say and everyone was happy.

Finally, Alex Click went home. He clicked the plant and it stood straight. He found his father still in place and his mother still in mid-sentence. He clicked twice — click, click.

"Change the channel," Daddy Click ordered. "No, keep it where it is," Mommy Click added. Alex Click was wonderful.

He was home. Copyright 1986, Washington Post Writers Group

THE NEW CHANCELLOR (That's Dr. Adkisson...)



Bolivian drug raids no cure for U.S. addictions

The Reagan administration has supported a cooperative venture with the Bolivian National Police in an attempt to capture and prosecute the producers of cocaine in Bolivia. This includes American troops with the latest design in helicopters, the Black Hawk. The two-month campaign against the processing plants signals the start of the Reagan decree that illegal drugs are presently a threat to our country's security.



Mark Ude

Americans now consume 60 percent of the world's production of illegal drugs. While 20 million use marijuana, four to eight million are regular cocaine users, and 800,000 are heroin addicts. More than 12 tons of heroin, 65 tons of marijuana and 150 tons of cocaine are overrunning this nation. Profits from

the sale of illegal drugs totals 100 billion dollars each year.

The Bolivian-U.S. anti-drug effort desperately is needed to help rid this country of rampant drug use, which has increased the amount of crimes committed by addicts in order to buy more narcotics for their habit. The Drug Enforcement Agency, along with the Coast Guard and Border Patrol, should be given top priority and much higher funding if they are to accomplish the drug-war job assigned to them.

But there are problems which accompany the enforcement of these laws and the attempt to stop narcotic production.

The first problem is attacking the wrong source of drugs. Plants from which narcotics are produced are grown because there is a market available — a big one. The largest share of the North American drug market is created by the demand for drugs in the United States. While a crackdown on drug manufacturers in the hinterland of Bolivia may help slow the incoming supply, it will not eliminate the source. As long as

American drug users maintain their insatiable addiction, there will be those who are willing to produce and distribute a very profitable cash crop.

The second problem with the attempted crackdown in Bolivia is the amount of money made. With Americans spending enormous amounts of cash, the organized crime rings easily can afford to buy off the important officials that could interdict the valuable trade routes. This includes both U.S. and South American governmental employees. The acceptance of buyoffs and bribes are not uncommon to the developing Third World, where income from jobs is notoriously low. An interesting note is the lack of surprise, due to prior announcement, which warned the drug

processors of an impending raid.

Another problem in the drug wars is that these "primitive" processing labs certainly will be replaced. They were primitive for good reasons — low cost and the ability to be rebuilt quickly. This allows producers to put forth minimum effort and investment but provide an easy escape with no loss.

Yet the most dominant factor in the drug war affecting the permanency of cocaine production is the amount of employment and capital offered to the regional population. Drug money in Bolivia adds up to \$600 million, more than all the legal exports. Drug-related employment creates jobs for 6.5 million people. Many of the natives are poor, unemployed and have numerous

mouths to feed, so they will grow, invest and process coca leaves in an available spot of ground just to provide food for the table.

The only avenue for success lies in the remaining hope of eradicating the present level of drug use in this country. The government's chance of successfully solving this problem is somewhat questionable.

The present attitude of many people is to ignore the problems of the user and attack the distributor of narcotics, which does nothing but hinder Johnny's quest for the elusive

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