

Ames Research Center
Moffett Field, California
94035

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Reply to Attn of: L: 200-7

December 2, 1976

TO: Johnson Space Center
Attn: DA/L. F. Dietlein, M.D.

FROM: Joseph C. Sharp, Deputy Director of Life Sciences

SUBJECT: SMD III Support

REFERENCE: DA-76-L205, ltr. to Ames Research Center, dtd. 11-19-76

Your understanding about our having, and desiring, two backup payload specialists under full and active training is correct. Further, we were not aware that our two backup specialists and their participation in the training was contingent upon Johnson Space Center not having a backup. I am sorry to hear that your budget for travel is starting to adversely impact your programs so directly. I had hoped that maybe one of the Centers had escaped that fate but I guess not.

In regard to your concern about the philosophy of having backup payload specialists for the SMD III and actual missions. As long as the philosophy continues to talk about prime crew and backup crews, I share your concern. However, I think the concept of backup crew for space-lab is another costly remanent of the past. I see no objective reason why there should not be a backup person for each position; in fact, there are many good reasons why such a tactic should be adapted. To replace a whole crew, if one member is incapacitated, makes no sense to me in the STS era. To replace an incapacitated payload specialist with one who has gone through the same training does make sense, and should not cost the price of a second set of hardware. You mention the existence of a requirement for the crew(s) to train as a unit. I have never been convinced of the necessity for this requirement. (I understand how such a requirement is convenient for the crew and certain ground-support people but not for mission success.) I cannot imagine anyone letting an actual launch slip because there was not a backup payload specialist. Maybe a slip could happen if the mission specialist were incapacitated but even he may not be so necessary or unique.

Yes, I agree. It is an issue we should talk to Dave about and, further,

L:200-7 - December 2, 1976

2

it's an issue the agency should consider since there will be flights other than life sciences.

Joe

Joseph C. Sharp

cc:

WEBerry, ARC

WHBush, JSC

WETHornton, JSC ✓