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Defense Intelligence

NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

DIGEST

(U)

November 1983 • Volume 7 • Number 11

JR0501 PERX
FDIA/DID/NOV/9/N/Z



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DECLASSIFIED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE
INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)
ISCAP APPEAL NO. 2009-068, document no. 283
DECLASSIFICATION DATE: May 14, 2015

DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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INTERNATIONAL VENTURES



AID

FRENCH SPACE EFFORT

FINANCIALLY unable to reach certain space program goals on its own, France is making considerable progress through research and development agreements with the Soviet Union and Western nations. At the same time, some solely French efforts are coming off the launching pad, ensuring that the Gaullist sponsored program is one of contribution and not just a free ride.

A number of agreements are on record between France and the USSR for space cooperation, but accomplishments have been less than spectacular. A space agreement between France and the Soviet Union was signed at the end of former President Charles de Gaulle's visit to the USSR in June 1966—seven months after France became the third nation to put a satellite into orbit. The agreement provided for cooperation in space exploration, weather, and telecommunications. However, Franco-Soviet ties have frayed at certain points along the cooperation spectrum, and France has carefully avoided heavy dependence on the USSR for advancement of its program.

In June 1967, France and West Germany signed an agreement to build a communications satellite, Sym-

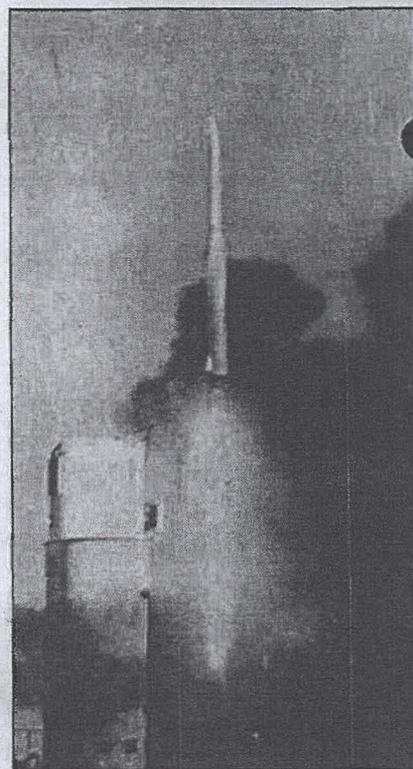
phonie, involving support from European Launcher Development Organization (ELDO), of which France is a member. France also belongs to the European Space Research Organization (ESRO), and since reorganization of both of these combines, France has assumed major roles in space research.

Working with other Western powers, France will assist in development of a meteorological satellite series, Eole, and is also a member of INTELSAT, the world communications satellite consortium.

Countdown with the Soviets

From the beginning, the Soviet Union has apparently regarded the prospect of cooperation with the French in space matters as being primarily of political interest. The Soviets probably hoped to turn French technology away from that of the United States and to promote disruption between France and the West.

On the French side, cooperation with the USSR was in line with the Gaullist policy of "independence" from the West in political and military affairs. But the French also hoped that collaboration with the Soviets would help to maintain momentum of their



Diamant three-stage booster (above) launched most French satellites, but now is deemed inadequate. Improved version is under development.

space program, despite French financial limitations.

Early in 1968 the Soviet Union invited France to participate in a project to place a communications satellite in orbit around the equator—a difficult and expensive undertaking that was to be a milestone in the Soviet space program. Moscow may have been hoping to drive a wedge into INTELSAT, to which France was committed. In any case, Maurice Schuman, French Minister of State for Scientific Research, was said to be opposed to the offer, and Paris turned it down. Reports later surfaced that at least twice France had refused the Soviet Union permission to establish facilities on French-controlled territories.

An early and ambitious Franco-Soviet space venture, Project Roseau, called for the orbiting of a 600-pound French earth satellite by a Soviet booster in the early 1970s. The venture was abandoned at the beginning of 1969 because of France's lack of funds; even so, French experimental equipment probably will be aboard a Soviet satellite.

Portion identified as non-responsive to the appeal

Franco-Soviet accomplishments in space have been modest. The experimental relay of television transmissions between Moscow and Paris via the Molniya communications satellite and the Soviet launching of French meteorological sounding-rocket payloads from the Soviet Arctic have been the most successful of their cooperative ventures. Future accomplishments probably will be of no larger scale, since France must still be cost-conscious. But, the French may seek to place some experiments in a Soviet circumlunar satellite and to participate in the laser experiment on the moon's surface.

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