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COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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October 27, 1986

Mr. Daniel J. Fink
 President
 D.J. Fink Associates
 8016 Matterhorn Court
 Potomac, MD 20854

Dear Mr. Fink:

Over the past several months the Subcommittee on Space Science and Applications has addressed a number of issues related to the Space Station which I believe merit an independent review such as can be provided by the NASA Advisory Council. Inasmuch as the decisions made now on the Space Station will heavily influence the environment in which space operations will be carried out over the next several decades, it is appropriate to focus as much attention as possible on the needs and requirements for space activities.

In general, I believe it would be beneficial to establish within the NASA Advisory Council an ongoing effort to review various operational, developmental, and utilitarian issues as they arise. There are two such issues which require immediate attention, however. First, the revised assembly sequence which has resulted from the recent Critical Evaluation Task Force study at Langley Research Center has raised serious questions regarding the potential of the Space Station to accommodate significant high quality attached payloads at an early time. Although the Langley Data Base contains a listing of science projects that could be integrated into the new assembly sequence, the priority, scientific merit, funding requirements and feasibility of these projects has not been critically reviewed. Thus it would be of great benefit to establish a mechanism to review the science mission baseline that can be accommodated by the Space Station assembly sequence and optimize the science return throughout the assembly and lifetime of the Station. I request that you establish a function to review NASA's mission baseline in this context including, if appropriate, slight variations in the assembly that may lead to a significant enhancement in the Station's scientific value. I note that the Task Force on the Scientific Uses of the Space Station, a part of the Space and Earth Sciences Advisory Committee, was previously active in this area. It would be appropriate to provide for the continuance of this capability.

Second, this Subcommittee has, over the past several years, expressed concern over the maturity of the operations concept for the Space Station. NASA has recently reestablished an Operations Task Force to address some of these issues. In order to ensure that the results of this effort properly address all of the critical decisions that will be made over the coming months, it would be of great value for the NASA Advisory Council to act in an independent review capacity.

I regard these issues as significant and of great importance to this Committee. I hope that you will be in a position to accept this responsibility. Your past leadership on the Council has been of great value to the space program.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson

BILL NELSON, Chairman
Subcommittee on Space Science
and Applications

WS/gb

COMMITTEE REPORT
W/S SPECIFICS?
OR ADMINISTRATION
REFUSED?

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

Washington, D.C.
20546

Reply to Attn of: LB

Honorable Bill Nelson, Chairman
Subcommittee on Space Science and Applications
Committee on Science and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Suite 2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thanks for your letter of October 27, 1986, suggesting that the NASA Advisory Council review appropriate aspects of the Space Station.

As you know, the Task Force for the Scientific Utilization of the Space Station was formed as a sub unit of our Space and Earth Science Advisory Committee two years ago. The Task Force, chaired by Dr. Peter Banks, has served effectively to bring to the Space Station design the views and requirements of the many science communities, and that design has evolved to accommodate well these requirements. With the Task Force due to go out of existence shortly, I have been discussing with my Council colleagues and with NASA how best to see that this work is expanded to provide an ongoing advisory structure for the entire Space Station program.

While some structural details have yet to be worked out, we agree that NASA should establish a formal Space Station Advisory Committee under the Council, with stature equal to that of the other six standing committees. Subcommittees or task forces would be established under that committee to deal with narrower issues associated with a single discipline, system, or function. Because the specialized subjects considered could, in many instances, also be the responsibility of other standing committees (e.g., scientific utilization, a principal concern of the Space and Earth Science Advisory Committee), we need to design close links among the committees. The exact mechanisms to do that have not yet been established.

We plan to address the two issues you asked of us in the following way:

We will extend the life of the present Task Force in order that it participate in reviews of the science utilization aspects of the draft Request for Proposals for Space Station development. The issue that you identified,

assembly sequence, priority, scientific merit, funding requirements, and feasibility of early attached payloads, is one that this Task Force could address, as well, and we will have them do so.

We will ask the new Space Station Advisory Committee to address the issue of Space Station operations concepts as soon as it can get organized. Indeed, a requirement to do so will serve to accelerate the establishment of that Committee and help bring it "up to speed."

We will keep you informed as we move ahead in these and other relevant activities.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Fink, Chairman
NASA Advisory Council