* Carl Berger, The Air Force in Space Fiscal Year 1961, USAF Historical Division Liaison Office, April 1966.

II. MAN ON THE MOON - A NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

(U) On 5 July 1960, months before the Gardner committee was created, the influential House Committee on Science and Astronautics in a report on the nation's missile and space programs recommended that a "high priority program should be undertaken to place a manned expedition on the moon this decade." In January 1961 the Wiesner committee suggested that the ultimate goal of NASA's Project Mercury should be establishment of a manned space station and "the eventual manned exploration of the moon and the planets." On 11-12 February, in a special report to the President, the Space Science Board of the National Academy of Sciences also recommended that "scientific exploration of the moon and planets should be clearly stated as the ultimate objective of the U.S. space program for the foreseeable future." On the other hand, outgoing President Eisenhower--in his last budget message to Congress on 16 January--was cautious. Referring to the Mercury system which was being tested to assure a safe manned orbital flight in 1961, he said additional test and experimentation would be needed to determine "if there are any valid scientific reasons for extending manned space flight beyond the Mercury program." [1]

(U) [illegible] did not immediately "buy" the proposed manned moon project. Instead, in one of his first orders of business after taking over the presidency, he chose to accelerate existing military and

civilian space programs. Thus, on 28 March 1961 in a special message to Congress on the defense program, he asked for an additional $144 million to speed development of Midas, Dyna-Soar, Discoverer, and several other space-oriented military projects. In addition, in a separate message dealing with the NASA program,he asked for new funds to accelerate development of larger boosters and other space projects.[2]

(U) The committee hearings on President Kennedy's revisions of the last Eisenhower budget had scarcely begun when the Soviet Union intervened once again to decisively energize the entire American program. On 12 April 1961 the Soviet Union announced that Major Gagarin had successfully orbited the earth in a 108-minute flight in a five-ton Vostok spacecraft, becoming the first man in history to fly through space. The impact of this event, while perhaps not as great as the launch of Sputnik I on 4 October 1957 (since the manned flight was anticipated), nevertheless generated much frustration, excitement,and gloom in the United States. One Congressman, Representative James G. Fulton of Pennsylvania, voiced a common complaint when he declared that he was "darn well tired of coming in second" in space. At a news conference President Kennedy agreed, saying that "no one is more tired than I am" of being behind the Russians. The news will be worse before it is better, and it will be some time before we catch up."[3]

(U) Commenting on the Russian success, during an appearance before a House subcommittee, General White, USAF Chief of Staff, declared that if there had ever been any doubt that the Soviet threat was increasing, it had been erased by the Gagarin flight. "This great achievement," he said, "is

(S) On 1 May 1961 Secretary Zuckert forwarded the Holzapple report to McNamara and re-stated the Air Force's concern over "the apparent inadequacy of our current National Space Program." He observed that unless the program was substantially broadened and upgraded at an early date, fundamental capabilities could not be made available in time to support known and anticipated space system requirements. Zuckert also noted that the USAF report being submitted was based on the Gardner and other Air Force studies but did "not necessarily relate to assignment of component missions." [7]

(S) The Air Force, the report declared, was convinced that the current national space program would not permit the nation to compete on equal terms with the Soviet Union. Yet it also was clear that the Russians could not be permitted to win the technological race "which potentially could shatter the Free World's security, alliances, and prestige." Should the Soviet space effort produce a real military superiority over the United States, it was likely the Russians "would brandish their new military power to intimidate and dominate the entire globe." Arguing for a broadened program, the Air Force said the nation's economic, scientific, and technological base was more than adequate to support an accelerated space effort; the only current limitation was lack "of firm decision and clear cut direction." [8]

(S) The Air Force listed the various military goals and objectives in space and described development efforts already under way. Most of these efforts needed to be either broadened or accelerated, with more

attention being given to basic and applied research and advanced technology. It identified the large booster program as the most immediate problem and the primary cause for the U.S. lag behind the Russians.

(S) The heart of the Air Force proposal came in a plea for a dramatic national objective since "the space lag existing between the USSR and the United States is due in large part to failure to establish a sharply focused national space goal and clear-cut assignment of responsibility for its achievement." It said that the exploitation of large boosters, recovery, re-entry, and rendezvous techniques, and manned space flights might suffice for military requirements in the next few years, but it would not allow for the sought-for supremacy in space exploration. The latter depended on some feat worthy not only of the nation's technological potential but of capturing the world's imagination. A clear decision to mount a manned expedition to the moon sometime between 1967-1970 would have tremendous international and national significance, while providing as a byproduct better ways to accomplish the national defense mission.[9]

(S) The Air Force said that long-time studies showed convincingly that an orderly and phased lunar expedition culminating in a 1967 landing and return was perfectly feasible. It would, however, require high priorities, appointment of a single manager, closely integrated support from all interested agencies, and provision of adequate funds. The Air Force estimated expenditures would mount to an annual rate of more than $4 billion, although benefits derived were seen as far exceeding that sum.[10]