

Official White House Transcript

of

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S PRESS AND RADIO CONFERENCE #123

(Filmed, Taped, and Shorthand Reported)

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Held in Room 474, Executive Office Building  
Thursday, October 9, 1957  
At 10:29 o'clock a.m.

This Copy For:-

The President



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NOTE: - THE ENTIRE TEXT OF THIS CONFERENCE  
WAS RELEASED FOR QUOTATION AND TO  
RADIO AND NEWSREELS.

Mr. Hagerty: There will be a statement by the President that we will now distribute to you ladies and gentlemen here. From this moment on, however, we are under Press Conference rules, and nobody can leave the room or the balcony. My girls will now distribute the statement.

Q(Ray L. Sherer, NBC) He is still coming at 10:30, is he not?

Mr. Hagerty: Yes.

(The statement referred to follows:)

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT FACTS IN  
THE DEVELOPMENT BY THE UNITED  
STATES OF AN EARTH SATELLITE



1. The first serious discussion of an earth satellite as a scientific experiment to be incorporated in the program for the International Geophysical Year took place at a meeting of the International Council of Scientific Unions in Rome in October 1954. At this meeting, at which Soviet scientists were present, a resolution was adopted by the scientists of the world recommending that "in view of the advanced state of present rocket techniques...thought be given to the launching of small satellite vehicles....."
2. Following this International Council meeting, the United States National Committee for International Geophysical Year, working under the sponsorship of the National Academy of Sciences, recommended that the United States institute a scientific satellite program. It was determined by the Administration that this program would be carried out as part of the United States' contribution to the International Geophysical Year.  
  
Responsibility within the Government for scientific aspects of the program was assigned to the National Science Foundation, working in close cooperation with the United States National Committee for the International Geophysical Year. The Department of Defense was made responsible for supplying the rocketry needed to place a satellite in orbit without interfering with the top priority ballistic missile program. In line with the recommendations of a group of United States scientists advising the Department of Defense, the satellite project was assigned to the Naval Research Laboratory as Project VANGUARD.
3. On July 29, 1955, at a White House press conference, participated in by representatives of the National Science Foundation and the National Academy of Sciences, it was announced that plans "are going forward for the launching

of small, unmanned earth circling satellites as part of the United States participation in the International Geophysical Year, which takes place between July 1957 and December 1958".

At this press conference it was specifically stated that the "data which will be collected from this program will be made available to all scientists throughout the world." The National Science Foundation, it was also announced, would work with the United States National Committee for the International Geophysical Year to formulate plans for the satellite and its instrumentation as well as plans for the preparation and deployment of the ground observer equipment required for the program.

4. In May of 1957, those charged with the United States satellite program determined that small satellite spheres would be launched as test vehicles during 1957 to check the rocketry, instrumentation, and ground stations and that the first fully-instrumented satellite vehicle would be launched in March of 1958. The first of these test vehicles is planned to be launched in December of this year.

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As to the Soviet satellite, we congratulate Soviet scientists upon putting a satellite into orbit.

The United States satellite program has been designed from its inception for maximum results in scientific research. The scheduling of this program has been described to and closely coordinated with the International Geophysical Year scientists of all countries. As a result of passing full information on our project to the scientists of the world, immediate tracking of the United States satellite will be possible, and the world's scientists will know at once its orbit and the appropriate times for observation.

The rocketry employed by our Naval Research Laboratory for launching our VANGUARD has been deliberately separated from our ballistic missile efforts in order, first, to accent the scientific purposes of the satellite and, second, to avoid interference with top priority missile programs. Merging of this scientific effort with military programs could have produced an orbiting United States satellite before now, but to the detriment of scientific goals and military progress.

VANGUARD, for the reasons indicated, has not had equal priority with that accorded our ballistic missile work. Speed of progress in the satellite project cannot be taken

as an index of our progress in ballistic missile work.

Our satellite program has never been conducted as a race with other nations. Rather, it has been carefully scheduled as part of the scientific work of the International Geophysical Year.

I consider our country's satellite program well designed and properly scheduled to achieve the scientific purposes for which it was initiated. We are, therefore, carrying the program forward in keeping with our arrangements with the international scientific community.

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(At 10:31, the President entered the conference room.)

THE PRESIDENT: Please sit down.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?



Q. Smith, United Press. Mr. President, Russia has launched an earth satellite. They also claim to have had a successful firing of an intercontinental ballistics missile, none of which this country has done. I ask you, sir, what are we going to do about it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, let's take, first, the earth satellite as opposed to the missile, because they are related only indirectly in the physical sense, and in our case not at all.

The first mention that was made of an intercontinental -- of an earth satellite that I know of, was about the spring of 1955 -- I mean the first mention to me -- following upon a conference in Rome where plans were being laid for the working out of the things to be done in the International Geophysical Year. Our people came back and with studying a recommendation of that conference that we now undertake, the world undertake, the launching of a small earth satellite, and somewhere in, I think May or June of 1955, it was recommended to me, through the Committee of or by the Committee for the International Geophysical Year, and through the National Science Foundation, that we undertake this project with a satellite to be launched somewhere during the Geophysical Year, which was from June 1957 until December 1958.

The sum asked for to launch a missile was 22 million dollars and it was approved.

For the government, the National Science Foundation was made the monitor of the work, for the simple reason that from the beginning the whole American purpose and design in this effort has been to produce the maximum in scientific information.

The project was sold to me on this basis.

My question was: What does mankind hope to learn? And the answer of the scientists was we don't exactly know, and that is the reason we want to do it, but we do hope to learn lots of things about outer space that will be valuable to the scientific world.

They did mention such things as temperatures, radiation, ionization, pressures, I believe residual pressures, from such air as would be at the altitude where successful orbiting was possible. That is the kind of information the scientists were looking for, and which they hoped to obtain from this project.

Now, in the first instance, they thought they would merely put up a satellite, and very quickly they found they thought they could put up a satellite with a considerable instrumentation to get, even during the Geophysical Year, the kind of information to which I have just referred.

So they came back, said they needed some more money. This time they went up to 66 million dollars and we said all right, in view of the fact we are conducting this basic research this seems logical. So we did that.

Then they came back, and I forget which one of the steps it came along, and they realized when you put this machine in the air, you had to have some very specially equipped observation stations, so the money, the sum of money, again went up to provide for these observation stations; and so the final sum approved, I think about a year ago, something of that kind, was 110 million dollars, with notice that that might have to go up even still more.

There never has been one nickel asked for accelerating the program. Never has it been considered as a race; merely an engagement on our part to put up a vehicle of this kind during the period that I have already mentioned.

Again emphasizing the non-military character of the effort, we have kept the Geophysical Year Committees of other nations fully informed all the time -- as, for example, the frequencies we would use when we put this in the air so that everybody, all nations, could from the beginning track it exactly -- know exactly where it was. And I believe it was  $10^8$  megacycles we were to use, and that was agreed throughout the world.

We are still going ahead on this program to make certain that before the end of the calendar year 1958, we have put a vehicle in the air with the maximum ability that we can



devise for obtaining the kind of scientific information that I have stated.

Now, every scientist that I have talked to since this occurred -- I re-called some of them and asked them -- every one of them has spoken in most congratulatory terms about the capabilities of the Russian scientists in putting this in the air. They expressed themselves as pleased rather than chagrined, because at least the Soviets have proved the first part of it, that this thing will successfully orbit. But there are a lot of other things in the scientific inquiry that are not yet answered, and which we are pushing ahead to answer. Now that is the story on the satellite. It is supplemented by a statement that we prepared this morning that has some of the basic facts to include the sequence of events.

As to their firing of an intercontinental missile, we have not been told anything about the details of that firing.

They have proved again and, indeed, this launching of the satellite proves, that they can hurl an object a considerable distance.

They also said, as I recall that announcement, that it landed in the target area, which could be anywhere, because you can make a target area the size you please, and they also said it was a successful re-entry into the -- to the atmosphere, and landing at or near the target.

Now, that is a great accomplishment, if done. I have talked to you in the past about our own development in this regard, as far as security considerations permit, and I can say this:

It, the ICBM, the IREM, we call them, we are still going ahead on those projects on top priority within the government, but incidentally a priority which was never accorded to the satellite program. The satellite program, having an entirely different purpose, even the scientists did not even think of it as a defense -- or security instrument, and the only way that the Defense Department is in it at all is because one of them, the Navy, was called upon as the agency to have the sites and the mechanisms for putting it in the air.

Q. Charles S. von Fremd, C.B.S. News. Mr. President, Khrushchev claims we are now entering a period when conventional planes, bombers, and fighters, will be confined to museums because they are outmoded by the missiles which Russia claims she has now perfected; and Khrushchev's remarks would seem to indicate he wants us to believe that our Strategic Air Command is now outmoded. Do you think that SAC is outmoded?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I believe it would be dangerous to

predict what science is going to do in the next twenty years, but it is going to be a very considerable time in this realm, just as in any other, before the old is completely replaced by the new, and even then it will be a question of comparative costs and accuracy of methods of delivery.

It is going to be a long term. It is not revolutionary, a revolutionary process that will take place in the re-equipping of defense forces, it will be an evolutionary.

Q. Clark, I.N.S. Mr. President, do you think our scientists made a mistake in not recognizing that we were, in effect, with Russia -- in a race with Russia in launching this satellite, and not asking you for top priority and more money to speed up the program?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, No I don't, because as -- even yet, let's remember this: The value of that satellite around the earth, going around the earth, is still problematical, and you must remember the evolution that our people went through and the evolution that the others went through.

From 1945, when the Russians captured all of the German scientists in Peenemunde, which was their great laboratory and experimental grounds for the production of the ballistic missiles they used in World War II, they have centered their attention on the ballistic missile.

Originally, our people seemed to be more interested in the aerodynamic missile, and we have a history of going back for quite a ways in modest research in the intercontinental ballistic missile, but until there were very great developments in the atomic bomb, it did not look profitable and economical to pursue that course very much, and our people did not go into it very earnestly until somewhere along about 1953, I think.

Now, so far as this satellite itself is concerned, if we were doing it for science and not for security, which we were doing, I don't know of any reasons why the scientists should have come in and urged that we do this before anybody else could.

Now, quite naturally, you will say, "Well, the Soviets gained a great psychological advantage throughout the world," and I think in the political sense that is possibly true. But in the scientific sense it is not true, except for the proof of the one thing, that they have got the propellants and the projectors that will put these things in the air.

Q. Scheibel, Gannett Newspapers. Mr. President, could you give the public any assurance that our own satellite program



will be brought up to par with Russia, or possibly improvement on it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well now, let's get this straight: I am not a scientist. I go to such men as Dr. Waterman, Dr. Bronk, Dr. Lawrence, all of the great scientists of this country, and they assured me back in the spring, I think it was, of 1955, this could be done, and they asked for a very modest sum of money compared to the sums we were spending on other research. So, in view of the fact that, as I said before, this was basic research, I approved it.

Now, the satellite that we are planning to put in the air will certainly provide much more information, if it operates successfully throughout, according to plan, it will provide much more information than this one can.

Q. May Craig, Portland, Maine, Press Herald. Mr. President, you have spoken of the scientific aspects of the satellite. Do you not think that it has immense significance, the satellite, immense significance in surveillance of other countries, and leading to space platforms which could be used for rockets?

THE PRESIDENT: Not at this time, No. There is no -- there is -- suddenly all America seems to become scientists, and I am hearing many, many ideas. (Laughter) And I think that within time, given time, satellites will be able to transmit to the earth some kind of information with respect to what they see on the earth or what they find on the earth. But I think that that period is a long ways off when you stop to consider that even now, and apparently they have, the Russians, under a dictatorial society, where they had some of the finest scientists in the world, who have for many years been working on it, apparently from what they say they have put one small ball in the air.

I don't -- I wouldn't believe that at this moment you have to fear the intelligence aspects of this.

Q. Burd, Chicago Tribune. Mr. President, considering what we know of Russia's progress in the missile field, ---

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q. (Burd) Are you satisfied with our own progress in that field, or do you feel there have been unnecessary delays in our development of missiles?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't say there has been unnecessary delay. I know that from the time that I came here and got into the thing earnestly, we have done everything I can think of, and know -- I will say this: Generally speaking, they have, more than one scientist has told me we were actually spending some money where it was doing no good.





Now the great reason for spending more money is because of the number of strings you put on your bow. In almost every field we have had several types and kinds working ahead to find which would be the more successful, so I can't say that I am dissatisfied.

I can say this: I wish we were further ahead and knew more as to accuracy and to the erosion and to the heat-resistant qualities of metals and all the other things we have to know about. I wish we knew more about it at this moment.

Q. (Burd) Is there some way that could have been done, something that could have been done that wasn't done?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'll tell you, shortly after I came here, I immediately assembled a group of scientists, through the Defense Secretary, to study the whole thing, and to give us something on which we could proceed with confidence, or at least pursuing the greatest possibilities according to scientific conclusions.

That we have done, and I think we have done it very earnestly, with a great deal of expense, a great deal of time and effort, and I don't know what we could have done more.

Q. Lawrence, New York Times. Mr. President, could you give us, sir, the American story, that is, this government's version of the incident that Mr. Khrushchev described to Mr. Reston in his interview when the Soviet government put forth a feeler as to whether or not Marshal Zhukov would be welcomed in this country, and according to Mr. Khrushchev were rebuffed?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I will say this, about the rebuff I know nothing. If there was any committed, I am sure it was unintentional.

Now, what happened: You will recall somebody in one of these meetings asked me whether I thought that a meeting between Mr. Wilson and Marshal Zhukov might produce anything useful, and I said it might, and that later -- I was talking to the Secretary about it, and he said it was a hypothetical question and got a hypothetical answer.

I don't know whether it would do any good or not; and he said well, there's this one thing about it, we have got to be ware--and of course this we all know -- of bilateral talks when you have allies and comrades in very great ventures like we have in NATO, and so on. And at that moment talks were going on in Britain on the disarmament business on a multilateral basis, and it would have probably had a very

