



Directorate of
Intelligence



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SW SWDR 83-242
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CONTENTS

28 JULY 1983

1

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28 JULY 1983
SW SWDR 83-242

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FRANCE: AMBITIOUS SPACE PROGRAM PROPOSED

Officials of the French space agency CNES have proposed an expanded space program that places emphasis on manned low-Earth-orbit operations and commercial materials processing. Elements of the CNES proposal include:

- Development of the Ariane-5 heavy booster. The Ariane-5 will be able to place 15,000 kg into low-Earth orbit or 7,800 kg into a geosynchronous transfer orbit.
- Development of a small spaceplane capable of carrying two pilots and either three passengers or 3,000 kg of cargo into a low-Earth orbit.
- Establishment of a permanent materials processing platform in Earth orbit. This platform would be an outgrowth of the European Space Agency (ESA) Eureca project.

To fund these programs, CNES has proposed doubling the current French space budget. The 1984 CNES budget would be 520 million dollars, compared to the average budget of 250 million dollars through 1982. CNES also has called for an annual spending increase of 21.67 million dollars from 1984 through 1990. The 1990 space budget would be 650 million dollars, over two and one-half times the 1982 budget.

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Comment:

Although we believe the French will not be able to finance the expansion of their space program without a major improvement in the national economy, they are still committed to making the space program a major priority. More than likely, these proposals are trial balloons for a comprehensive program to be presented to the ESA at their next budget hearing. Both the Ariane-5 and the spaceplane projects have been considered favorably by the ESA, although no funds have been committed for either system. A European permanent orbital materials processing center, serviced by a European spaceplane, would mollify the West Germans, who favor manned space projects and have entered into bilateral agreements with the United States for use of the US Space Shuttle.