

GEMINI IX

Use of augmented target docking adapter

The Gemini IX flight which was attempted on May 17, 1966, almost 2 months to the day after the Gemini VIII flight, was scrubbed due to the failure of the Atlas to propel the target vehicle into orbit. To obtain a suitable rendezvous target vehicle for Gemini IX, the Augmented Target Docking Adapter (ATDA) was then prepared for launch. This contingency vehicle development had been initiated following the failure of the Gemini VI target vehicle in October 1965. The ATDA illustrated here was in essence a target vehicle without propulsion but with an attitude control system and with a docking adapter (fig. 2, MG66-8988).

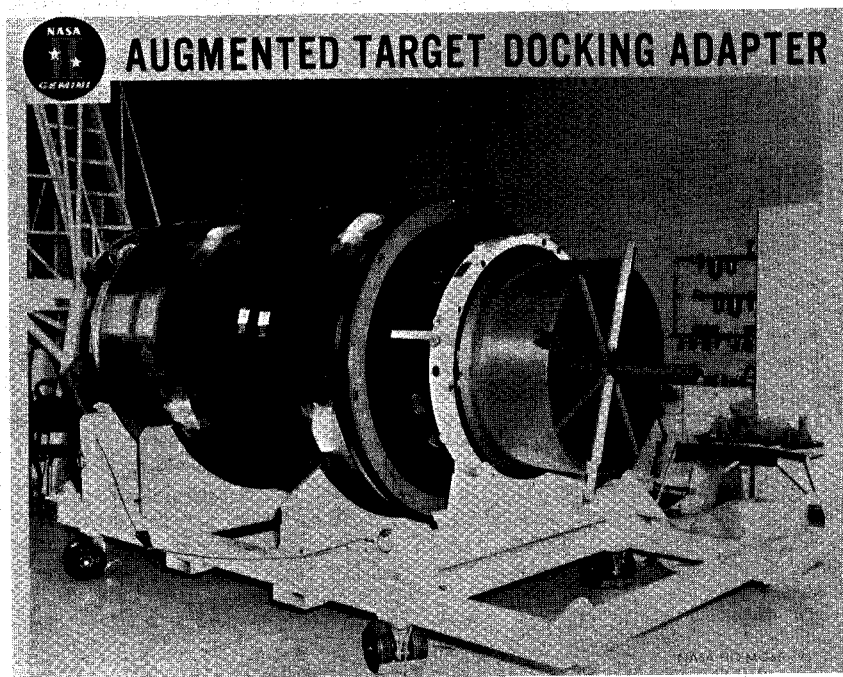


FIGURE 2

The early delivery of target launch vehicles permitted the Gemini IX mission, now designated Gemini IX-A, to be rescheduled and launched on June 3, 1966. The ATDA heat shield failed to separate and docking was precluded after rendezvous. The configuration of the unseparated heat shield became known as the "angry alligator" shown in this view (fig. 3, MG67-5813).

Shift to alternate mission

With the primary mission of Gemini IX-A precluded, a decision was made to shift to the preplanned alternate mission. This alternate mission provided significant scientific and technological information. Three different rendezvous were completed. The initial rendezvous