

Mr. TASSIN. I am advised by our technical people, and I will give you my short answer on that, that the fairings are a very delicate item. They can cause damage to the aircraft when they break up, as well as cause damage on ingestion into the engine intakes. And these are an item requiring very careful manufacture, very careful treatment, very careful tests, before they are used on an aircraft with these launchers, and that there is only one approved source for the fractionable or grenade-type fairing, and that is Western Molded Fiber, now owned by the H. I. Thompson Co.

Mr. ROBACK. The fact it is an approved source is merely because they were doing a satisfactory job and not because they were the only source that could do a satisfactory job; is that not the case?

You do not really know, and you do not know to this minute or to this day how many people could make nose fairings that are acceptable and might become competitive?

Captain McMorries. This is a statement that I think is quite accurate. However, my understanding, and I would like Mr. Morgan to address this, we are aware of the difficulties with the fairing and have sought to secure other producing sources, and improve fractionable fairings.

Mr. Morgan, could you elaborate a little bit on that?

Mr. ROBACK. Excuse me, Captain. Do I understand you have difficulties with the performance of the fairing?

Captain McMorries. Not to my personal knowledge.

Mr. ROBACK. You mean difficulties with the manufacture?

Captain McMorries. No.

Mr. ROBACK. Are you getting a satisfactory fairing or is that a risk item today?

Captain McMorries. To the best of my knowledge, it is the approved fairing that we have.

Mr. ROBACK. Has it given you any kind of trouble, Mr. Morgan?

Mr. MORGAN. No, sir. The so-called grenade fairing, which is the latest fairing developed by Western Molded a number of years ago, is giving satisfactory results. We have attempted to develop other sources for fairings. I have had programs at China Lake, I have had programs at the Naval Ordnance Station in Louisville where we have gone to reputable plastic suppliers to see whether they could come up with a fairing that would be competitive, and so far we have failed. We are still trying. We want to get out from under the sole source posture.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AT CHINA LAKE

Mr. ROBACK. What is the nature of the development at China Lake with regard to a launcher? How long has it been going on and what are you trying to do and what service use will it have?

Can I have a brief concise answer on that question?

Captain McMorries. We started in 1966. I think Commander Katcher can address that rather fully.

Commander KATCHER. A project order or WEPS task order was sent to China Lake in 1966 by the then Bureau of Naval Weapons. This project order called for them to attempt to develop four basic types of launchers which would do two things. It would meet all of the service needs; in other words, this was a Navy-Marine project, but it was an