

This morning Mr. Webb, and Dr. Paine and other NASA officials will present and discuss with the committee NASA's proposed fiscal year 1969 operating plan.

Mr. Webb and Dr. Paine, would you indicate whether or not your prepared statements can be made public and whether we may release them?

Mr. WEBB. There is nothing in my statement that could not be released to the public, and I believe that to be the case with Dr. Paine's statement.

Dr. PAINE. That is correct. I have no objection to releasing the statements if the committee wishes.

CHAIRMAN. All right, we will release them later.

Go ahead, Mr. Webb.

STATEMENT OF JAMES E. WEBB, ADMINISTRATOR, NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

Mr. WEBB. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity for NASA to present its fiscal year 1969 interim operating plan, and to relate it to the program plans which were presented to you earlier this year in support of the President's budget request for NASA. As you know, now that congressional action is completed on the independent offices appropriation bill, we will be taking steps with the Director of the Budget to convert this interim plan into approved programs and projects based on the Bureau's apportionments.

Today may well mark my final appearance before you as Administrator of NASA. With your permission, Deputy Administrator Thomas O. Paine will present the interim operating plan in detail, since you will be looking to him as the Acting Administrator after October 7. However, I would like to make a brief statement on several matters of importance during the period of uncertainty when this interim plan is in effect and our Government is undergoing the changes that take place with the installation of a new administration and the beginning of a new Congress.

NASA ORGANIZATION STRONGEST IN HISTORY

As you know, Mr. Chairman, I have felt for some time that at some proper time I should retire from full-time Federal service. During the past year I have devoted a great deal of my time, working with senior NASA officials, to the task of insuring that the strongest possible organization was emerging. Last month I reported to the President on a number of matters and pointed out that NASA has, with the recent induction of a number of experienced executives, the strongest and most capable organization it has had in its 10-year history. I told him that it was fully capable of functioning at peak efficiency without me, and, indeed, without filling the position of Administrator between now and next January if I should retire on my 62d birthday. I pointed out that the next President would find, on entering office,