

ADVANCED RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

Aeronautics.—Work in aeronautics will proceed at the level authorized. The original budget request for Aeronautical Vehicles was \$76.9 million, and the amount authorized, \$74.9 million. The authorized level will support the projects essentially as outlined in the original budget justification, with minor revisions. In addition, we will accelerate our efforts to advance the definition and implementation of NASA's supporting function so that NASA can make the most effective contribution to those agencies, such as DOD and DOT, which have specific developmental responsibilities.

Nuclear Rockets.—In testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 24th, Mr. Webb indicated that it was doubtful that sufficient funds could be programmed to begin development of the NERVA flight-weight engine at the \$4.008 billion level. Our analysis of our total fiscal year 1969 budget problem and all the constraints we face at this time for late fiscal year 1969 and fiscal year 1970 have confirmed the earlier judgment that funds sufficient for this development cannot be programmed at the \$3.85 billion level. Therefore, we have decided to limit the fiscal year 1969 effort in nuclear rockets and to defer the development of the flight-weight NERVA engine at this time. Originally, the tentative operating plan before you provided \$25 million for nuclear rockets and, thus, \$32.5 million total would have been available for this program during fiscal year 1969, since we would also apply \$7.5 million which was withheld in fiscal year 1968. In addition to continuation of a limited advanced technology effort and experimental engine testing, we planned, in providing funds at this level, to hold together a sufficient cadre of design, development and test personnel to permit us to proceed with development of the flight-weight engine, if possible, in fiscal year 1970. We will seek support to do so.

After the interim operating plan was first formulated, Mr. Beggs, Mr. Finger, Mr. Klein of the Joint AEC/NASA Office, and I visited the various NERVA sites in an attempt to make certain, first-hand, if this could in fact be accomplished at the \$32.5 million level. We have determined that the development could proceed in fiscal year 1970 with greater continuity and momentum if additional funds totaling \$7 million were made available. Thus, \$39.5 million in total would be available under the plan. The additional funds which we are providing would allow more complete experimental engine testing and permit us to retain more of the highly skilled contractor personnel now engaged in the nuclear rocket program, thus assuring the possibility of a more economical progress toward a flight-weight engine in fiscal year 1970. These contractor personnel will proceed with the design of the NERVA engine and, to the extent possible, component design and development, furthering the progress, albeit limited, toward an operational nuclear rocket capability.

We appreciate fully the long range benefits of nuclear propulsion and of the prospects for its use in the future national space program. Faced with the great difficulty of achieving a balanced program in fiscal year 1969, and of holding expenditures to a minimum in fiscal year 1969 and fiscal year 1970, we have taken the actions we believe necessary to achieve some NERVA program continuity and work toward an eventual nuclear rocket capability.