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NEWS RELEASE

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PHASE 3-D LAUNCH UPDATE

MARBURG, GERMANY (AMSAT News Service) On Wednesday July 16, 1997 a meeting was held in Marburg, Germany among Dr. Karl Meinzer DJ4ZC, Phase 3-D Project Leader and AMSAT-DL President; Werner Haas DJ5KQ, AMSAT-DL Vice President; and officials of the European Space Agency (ESA). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the launch schedule for Ariane 502, on which the Phase 3-D spacecraft is scheduled to fly.

At this meeting, the ESA officials re-iterated their intent to launch Ariane 502 at the end of September and said that the launch campaign for this flight has already begun. They also stated that, as part of this launch campaign, the Phase 3-D spacecraft must arrive at ESA's Launch Center in Kourou, French Guyana by August 10th.

Earlier, ESA had informed AMSAT that, following analysis of data from the Ariane 501 flight, they had significantly increased their estimates for the acceleration and vibration environment which spacecraft riding on Ariane 502 are expected to encounter. As a result of this new information, AMSAT has been re-evaluating the structural capabilities of the Phase 3-D spaceframe.

As a part of this effort, an independent structural engineer was brought in to review the spacecraft's design and construction. His conclusions were recently presented to Dr. Meinzer and AMSAT-NA people. His report stated that, in order to be confident of P3-D surviving the stresses from this increased launch environment, a number of modifications must be made to the spacecraft. Since that report was presented, substantial effort has been taking place at the Phase 3-D Integration Laboratory in Orlando, Florida to manufacture and install the recommended structural parts necessary to increase the spacecraft's vibration and acceleration capabilities.

At the Marburg meeting, Dr. Meinzer made it clear to ESA officials that this work, made necessary by ESA's new environmental information, would prevent AMSAT from delivering the spacecraft to Kourou by the specified August 10th date. Thus, it was the conclusion of the meeting that, as a result of these ESA specification changes, the Phase 3-D schedule and that of ESA for Ariane 502 are not currently compatible. That is, unless something changes (a situation which ESA does not presently contemplate) Phase 3-D will not be able to launch on Ariane 502.

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Furthermore, in order to maintain the planned mass characteristics of the Ariane 502 vehicle, AMSAT must now also supply ESA with a mass simulator representing the (possibly absent) Phase 3-D spacecraft to be sent aloft on the flight. This simulator must be in Kourou by September 5th.

Despite this very bad news, Dr. Meinzer and other AMSAT officials expressed some degree of confidence that Phase 3D may yet fly on Ariane 502. This confidence is based on a number of activities taking place in the preparation of the launch vehicle that AMSAT officials believe could cause a slip in the currently published ESA schedule.

ESA officials attending the Marburg meeting said that if such a slip should occur (again, a situation which ESA does not currently contemplate) and the slip results in the two schedules becoming compatible once more, efforts would be made to substitute the Phase 3-D spacecraft for the mass simulator. Therefore, AMSAT is continuing work on completing the necessary structural modifications to the Phase 3-D spacecraft as well as conducting environmental testing.

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