



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THOR-ABLE III

Thor-Able III is the latest version of a rocket configuration that has served as the vehicle for a number of important missile and space experiments.

Originally designed to test second-generation nose cones at ICBM ranges, altitudes and speeds, the first Able vehicle was launched in the Spring of 1958.

Proposed and developed by Space Technology Laboratories, Inc., Los Angeles, it consisted of a Thor IRBM topped with a second stage similar to that used in the Thor-Able III vehicle. Able traveled intercontinental distances, the first to do so in the history of the nation's ballistic missile program.

On two occasions during record breaking flights, Able carried a mouse in its nose cone. Labeled Project MIA (Mouse In Able), the biomedical experiment provided information on the effects of space flight and weightlessness on a living organism. The mice carried aloft in the Able nose cones traveled further into space than any animal to date.

Following success of the Able flights, scientists at STL determined that the same combination with additional stages added would provide the country with a rocket capable of traveling great distances into space.

- more -

The resulting space probe vehicle, Able-1, sent its payload further and faster into space than any rocket up to that time. Weighing 85 pounds, Pioneer I traveled a distance of 70,000 miles into space before falling back to burn in the earth's atmosphere. During the flight valuable information on the space environment was collected by its instrumentation and relayed to ground tracking stations.

At present another series of advanced Able two-stage rockets continues tests over ICBM distances, carrying out experiments vital to the development of advanced missile designs and materials.

From the idea of combining existing hardware to form the Able test vehicle has come a "workhorse" of the space probe program. Its latest form, Thor-Able III, has placed the most complex package of instrumentation yet developed into an orbit around the earth far larger than any other, continuing the long line of Able's achievements.

###