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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE

CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600 • TELEGRAMS: "SUPDEP" • TELEX: 62063 • TELEPHONE 48 2111

In Reply Quote 651/1/2

26 JUN 1970

Dear *Don,*

The Secretary has received from the Prime Minister's Department a copy of a letter from the Embassy of the United States concerning the Australian support for Apollo 13.

The letter quotes messages of appreciation from President Nixon and Dr. Paine and singles out some particular areas where outstanding support was given. Included was the part played by your station.

I enclose a copy of the Embassy's letter for you to add to your records of the occasion, and with it I send once again my personal congratulations.

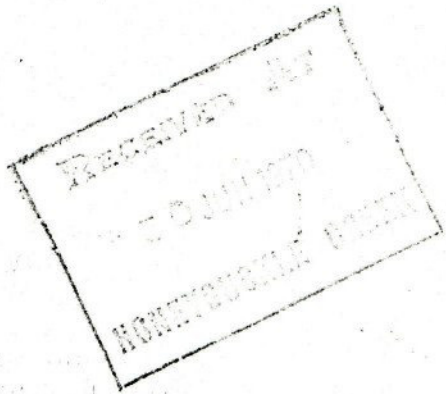
Yours sincerely,

*Bob Leslie*

(R. A. LESLIE)  
Assistant Controller  
American Projects Branch

Mr. D. J. Gray,  
Station Director,  
Honeysuckle Creek Tracking  
Station,  
P.O., Box 369,  
MANUKA, A.C.T. 2603

Encl.





EMBASSY  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
Canberra, Australia



May 7, 1970

Mr. C. L. Hewitt, O.B.E.  
Secretary  
Prime Minister's Department  
Canberra, A. C. T.

Dear Mr. Hewitt:

The Prime Minister is absent, and Ambassador Rice is out of Canberra today. I would not wish to delay the expression of our warmly felt gratitude for Australian assistance during the recent dramatic mission of Apollo 13.

I am instructed to deliver the following message from President Nixon to Prime Minister Gorton:

"Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

"On behalf of the people of the United States I wish to express to you and to the people of Australia my deep appreciation for your nation's assistance in the successful recovery of the Apollo XIII astronauts.

"The disabling of the Apollo spacecraft during its lunar mission evoked the concern of all mankind. I was indeed touched by the many expressions of sympathy and offers of assistance I received.

"The safe recovery of the astronauts, for which we are all profoundly thankful, in no way lessens the gratitude of the Government and people of the United States for your nation's immediate response to our need for assistance.

Please convey my personal thanks to all of your people who worked so hard to maintain our communications with the weakened Apollo XIII spacecraft as it returned to earth. Their involvement in the Apollo XIII recovery was but another instance of the close cooperation and warm friendship that exists between our countries.

"Sincerely, Richard Nixon."

The Director of the National Aeronautics and Space Agency, Dr. T. O. Paine, has sent the following message to The Honorable Kenneth McColl Anderson, Minister for Supply:

"Thank you very much for your cordial message of congratulations on the safe recovery of the Apollo 13 astronauts. The immediate rallying of Australian skills and resources to enhance communications with the weakened Apollo 13 spacecraft pays great tribute to Australian spirit and friendship toward America and its space program in which Australia has played a continuously greater role. I tender to you and the staffs of the government agencies and contractors who performed so dedicatedly during the perilous hours of the Apollo 13 flight the warmest appreciation of the NASA team and especially those of the astronauts."

Further, I am advised that there were many particular cases in which outstanding support was given. Among these were:

A. Tracking and data acquisition support by crews of Honeysuckle and Carnarvon manned space flight stations was most important to the safe recovery of the Apollo astronauts. Personnel displayed the highest technical competence and skill in providing tracking and data acquisition from

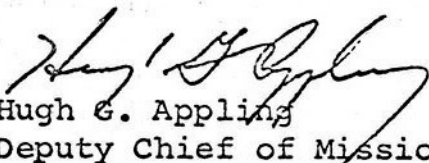
the crippled Apollo 13 spacecraft operating in a reduced power mode on exceptionally weak signals.

B. The crew of Parkes antenna deserves high praise. Without forewarning, personnel were transported 300 miles, the antenna feed was altered, and microwave links and directional signals were installed, all in the incredibly short time of seven hours. Previous estimates of the shortest time to do the job was 24 hours. This support was absolutely outstanding.

C. Support of Apollo range and instrumentation aircraft (A/RIA) was extremely important and helpful. All A/RIA operations at Cocos Island and Darwin staging bases were handled smoothly in a highly professional manner. The unexpected switch of A/RIA to Perth from Cocos and the operation from Darwin of A/RIA in a recovery mode during the Apollo 13 landing were accommodated without problem. Such flexibility in GOA support is a significant contribution to the successful recovery of the Apollo 13 crew.

These contributions to saving the lives of our astronauts and the extraordinary skill and devotion which was shown in this greatest emergency of our space program are most deeply appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

  
Hugh E. Appling  
Deputy Chief of Mission