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RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA
RCA VICTOR DIVISION
CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY

FRANK M. FOLSON
Executive Vice-President
In Charge of
RCA VICTOR DIVISION

22 November 1948

General Hoyt S. Vandenberg
Commanding General United States Air Force
National Defense Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear General Vandenberg:

I wish to call your attention to some of the circumstances surrounding the crash of Air Force B-29 Serial TV45-21866 on 6 October 1948 near Waycross, Georgia, which resulted in the deaths, among others, of four civilian electronic engineers, two of whom were employees of RCA and another of whom was employed by the Franklin Institute, our subcontractor. I believe that some conclusions can be drawn from this experience which will point out steps that should be taken to reduce the probabilities of such accidents in the future. Moreover, other steps will be required to assure that our engineers will be willing to assume the unavoidable risks incident to flight tests in military aircraft.

Early in 1946 this Corporation initiated research and development work under contract with the Air Materiel Command leading to the construction of several development models of a pilotless aircraft guidance system called Banshee. Experimental flight tests of this equipment, installed in the B-29 aircraft, were begun in the Spring of 1947 at Boca Raton, Florida, and were continued at Warner Robbins Field, Macon, Georgia, after the removal of the AMC facilities at Boca Raton. RCA had primary responsibility for the electronic tests of the program, but flight and maintenance crews were military personnel. In carrying out their responsibilities, RCA personnel were aboard the aircraft on all Banshee flight tests.

Although we have not received authoritative information from the Air Force regarding the cause of the accident, it appears from available informal information and from the statements of one survivor (another employee of the Franklin Institute) that one of the engines caught fire, followed shortly by a loss of power in a second engine. At about the same time the plane went into a spin or tight spiral, and the resulting centrifugal force prevented escape ~~maneuvers~~ for some time. The civilian engineers had received no preflight briefing in emergency bailout procedures

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