

Space Shots Worrying Govts.

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ish and 4% Belgian -- has sparked a quiet feud between its two major (though unequal) partners over what is media material.

Sweden, a stone's throw from Soviet missile bases and nuclear subfleets, tends to let out shots of such military sites. France often holds off on these "sensitive" disclosures. Ditto the Iran-Iraq war zone, where France has a high stake.

Still, major discoveries about these zones, plus Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon, contra bases inside Nicaragua, and PLO movements, have shown up on American and European (including French) tv thanks to American orbiter Landsat.

Laws Are Few

Because newsgathering by satellite is still in the pioneer stage, laws are few and virtually unenforceable. Under the 1967 Space Treaty, there is no national sovereignty in extratmospheric space: Extraterrestrial snooping is UN legal.

Theoretically, space agencies controlling satellites and their ground station release points observe an "open skies" policy on data gathering and distribution.

But quiet moves already have been made toward regulatory capability. Landsat, launched in '72, was originally administered by NASA, making it subject to the Space Treaty's nondiscriminatory access rule, i.e., requests for data cannot be denied except in cases of a clear threat to national security.

With President Reagan came privatization to "free" the space camera from government control -- putting it under close FCC-type regulation.

The French say they will walk a line between state and private management of their more advanced orbiter, launched in February '86, and have set up Spot Image for public distribution of space views, including domestic and international tv. However, all media releases must be cleared with the Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales, including commentary accompanying the images.

The Wild West

According to Peter Fend, prexy of Ocean Earth Corp., which has researched and produced all satellite

Experts in military strategy, geology and oceanography study the images and decipher their meaning. Analysis is the crucial ingredient, a CBS correspondent noted. "You have to be told what you are looking at, (otherwise) they look like abstract art."

Because of this ambiguity, network editors and reporters urge stringent standards of independent analysis. Satellite companies should not release finished product, they contend, because the distinction between data -- raw facts -- and information -- interpretation -- gets lost.

As a warning, they cite Eosat and Swedish Space Corp.'s distribution of Chernobyl disaster pics at no charge to print and tv outlets. Virtually all were incorrect or misleading, and substantially different from the independently produced (and expensive) shots from Ocean Earth.

Most news editors took the "official" pics, which the scientific community later threw out as false. Networks were irritated. The question in Congress may turn out to be, "Who's zooming who?"

Satellite News Worries Defense Agencies Overseas

By BETHANY HAYE

Paris -- The use of satellite pictures and video footage for tv news is worrying government security agencies. Though space shots of hot spots from the Falklands to Chernobyl have flashed across network and state-run television since 1982, some sectors of U.S. and European governments are now querying implications for national defense. In turn, the news industry is gearing up to guard Freedom of Information from space.

Stateside, the House Science & Technology Committee has commissioned a report on "national security, the needs of media, and legal issues connected with remote sensing" for which a mixed bag of network news execs, research scientists and legal experts will huddle in Washington Dec. 18.

In Europe, the shared Spot civil satellite -- 90% French, 6% Swed-