Re: shootin down that recon satellite

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On Feb 16, 7:45 pm, Leopold Stotch <butt...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

> 2.) USA 193 is a NRO payload. It has been speculated to be a radarsat, optical imaging sat, signals intelligence sat or some combination of the three. It is the latest generation of spy sat that the U.S. has deployed. It is entirely possible that large enough pieces of debris may come down intact that would allow a foreign power to glean significant information on the satellite's capabilities and technologies should it land in a recoverable area. Obviously the U.S. would like to minimize the chance that some foreign power might recover a technologically significant piece of this satellite.

This theory just doesn't add up for me. Since the earliest spysats (e.g., Corona), every component that could reenter had clever passive countermeasures to ensure that nothing sensitive could fall into less−than−friendly hands. Corona's reentering film capsules, for example, were rather ingeniously designed to sink if not recovered in 24 hours after ocean splash down. See: <http://www.vectorsite.net/tamrc_06.html#m2>

Surely, the NRO satellite was design with the possibility in mind that it might someday reenter in an uncontrolled fashion and land somewhere that would be less−than−desirable for national security interests. For example, standard practice for sensitive military electronics is to build them on a substrate of Pryofuze, an energetic reacting Pd/Al alloy that can be triggered to "burn" (exothermally alloy), generating over 2000 K and melting circuits, etc. Recall reports of the "puff of smoke" that was observed when the EP−3 spy plane opened its doors after being forced down in China. These are examples of active devices (i.e., they need to be triggered), but I can't conceive that a similar passive self−destruct mechanism is absent from the more sensitive NRO satellite components.

The official story−−that they did not expect to lose control of the satellite immediately after arrival on orbit, with the hydrazine tank still full−−appears to hold more water. Whether this justifies the

shoot−down, or is being used as justification for some ulterior
motive, is another question.
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