

isotopic power side of the SNAP program, Hayworth reported with “considerable satisfaction” on program successes: launchings in June and November of the previous year of isotope power devices on Navy Transit navigational satellites. Looking to the future, he said, “We are continuing to work closely with DOD and NASA to satisfy their requirements for space SNAP devices, and... we have developed a plutonium 238 fueled 25 watt unit, SNAP-9-A, for use in the Navy’s operational prototype Transit satellites.” Hayworth also spoke of the work with NASA on the development of the SNAP-11, a 25-watt curium-242 fueled thermoelectric generator planned for powering the Surveyor soft landing lander.⁶

Thus NASA readied itself for the time when it would become the major user of the isotope units and the small RTG group would open its membership to growing numbers of people and organizations.

A Climate of Renewed Determination and Hope

Great Power confrontations affected the RTG program. The Soviets broke the nuclear atmospheric test moratorium that had been honored by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union since November 1958. President Kennedy ordered the resumption of underground testing. In April 1962, while the nation still hailed the triumph of John Glenn’s first orbit of the Earth by an American, the president authorized the resumption of atmospheric tests off Christmas Island. The tests provoked considerable adverse public reaction around the world as well as at home.⁷ The Cuban Missile Crisis in October marked the height of international tension. By the summer of 1963, Kennedy seemed determined on a course that would bring the Great Powers back from the brink of war and start them on a road of cooperation, at least on the issue of nuclear testing. Perhaps benefiting from international tensions, NASA and AEC research moved ahead while Great Power confrontations unfolded.

In June 1963, the president chose the occasion of a commencement address at the American University in Washington, D.C., to lay out a new course for the Great Powers to follow in the search for peace and accommodation of their differences. Was peace possible? “Our problems are man made—therefore, they can be solved by man” the president believed. Was it possible to be at peace with an aggressive communist Super Power? “No government