stream cannot be mothballed."[13] Nevertheless, as NASA in its fiscal 1967 budget request attempted to break out of the $5.2 billion budget plateau it had been restricted to for three fiscal years, and to obtain funding for an extended Apollo Extension Systems program, prospects were that a cut rather than an increase was in the offing. Writing about NASA's budget problems and its requests for additional funds, a space journal commentator wrote in February 1966:

> ...the harsh requirements of the war in Viet Nam punctured this happy prospect, and NASA found it could not even hold the old line on its budget. Though the final figure had not been disclosed at this writing, it appeared likely that it would come close to $5 billion, the first major rollback in the brief history of the space agency.[14]

Social and political influences had ever increasing impact on the nation's space program and its RTG components. Nonetheless, the major items in the RTG program inventory carried the program through the decade—to the realization of important technical developments and a place of honor in the culmination of the race to the Moon. Two SNAP devices had major roles in the NASA missions which required the close AEC-NASA coordination that marked the last half of the decade. SNAP-19 became an auxiliary power source for NASA's Nimbus weather satellite. SNAP-27 provided the power supply for the Apollo Lunar Surface Experiments Package that was left on the Moon by all Apollo missions but the first one. These two milestone RTGs and their Nimbus and Apollo missions warrant special treatment in this history of the RTG program.

The Test on Nimbus

A request from NASA to the AEC to determine the feasibility of using a 50-watt RTG for the Nimbus weather satellite was transmitted in July 1963. The request led to isotopic system design and integration studies by the AEC in cooperation with NASA and to NASA's establishment of a requirement for SNAP-19. The use of SNAP-19 on the NASA weather satellite Nimbus was a crossroads for the RTG program. It led to a major reconceptualization of safety procedures and was a prelude to NASA's uses of RTGs on Apollo and other space missions. Milt Klein*

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