Satellite Superiority

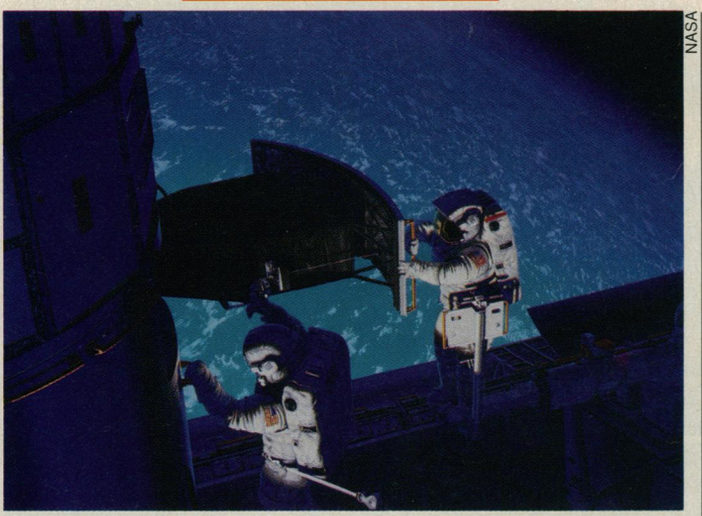
■ If the Gulf war drags on—and of course no one wants it to—TV news networks may be able to obtain satellite pictures of Kuwait from an unlikely source: the Soviet Union. *Science* has learned that Soyuzkarta, a Soviet agency, plans to sell high-resolution pictures of the Persian Gulf to the West after it launches a new satellite sometime in late spring. These photos would give the public its most detailed view of the Persian Gulf since last August, when France stopped selling such images from its SPOT satellite to the media.

The Soviet satellites stay in orbit for a few weeks, and only yield pictures when the film returns to Earth. But their 5-meter resolution—twice as good as SPOT, and 6 times better than LANDSAT, the best American commercial surveillance satellite—allows them to show individual houses, roads, airplanes, and possibly even tanks. For example, Soviet photos sold to the media in September "clearly showed American positions in Saudi Arabia," says Velon Minshew, a manager for the American company that markets the Soviet photos.

Kuwait City

Central Trading Systems V/O Soyuzkarta

For the moment, however, the Pentagon doesn't appear too concerned. Says one retired Air Force general: "A 5-meter resolution [photograph] 3 weeks after the fact wouldn't be particularly worrisome." But what if photos became available in mid-February? One source hinted that a Soviet satellite launched 17 January into a low orbit over the Persian Gulf might provide such shots. If so, expect a network stampede—and a Pentagon backlash.



NASA

Astronauts replace a Hubble camera in this artist's conception.

NASA Puts Off Hubble Visit

■ Astronomers who thought NASA was ready to rush in with a repair crew in a couple of years to fix the blurry vision of the Hubble Space Telescope may be disappointed. Although NASA had scheduled a shuttle visit in July 1993, NASA officials now say that the flight has been pushed back 5 months in order to allow more time for design and development of three key components for the troubled orbital observatory.

"It didn't make much sense to tell the entire world we'd be ready in July 1993 when we knew it wouldn't happen," says deputy project manager Dennis McCarthy, who hastens to point out that there is no problem with any of the three systems—testing them will just take more time than originally planned. They include an upgrade to the Wide Field/Planetary Camera, an instrument intended to correct Hubble's spherical aberration, and new solar panels designed to eliminate an annoying "jitter" experienced by the telescope as it passes from light to shadow.

The combined weight of these components is great enough that Hubble won't get boosted into a higher orbit this mission. Look for that visit in 1996.

Fusion Megabucks

■ A last-minute rescue may be in store for a fusion project that last year seemed headed for oblivion. Federal funding is so tight that many scientists had begun to fear that the Department of Energy would scuttle plans for the Burning Plasma Experiment (BPX), the scheduled replacement for Princeton's aging Tokamak Fusion Test Reactor. But DOE, taking a hint from the State Department's international hat-passing to fund the Persian Gulf war, recently asked for foreign participation in the BPX—and seems to have found a major donor in the Italian government.

Two ranking DOE officials traveled to Italy in mid-December, hoping to capitalize on the European Community's recent decision not to build a similar fusion experiment called Ignitor. Italy had earmarked $500 million for Ignitor's construction, which now could go a long way toward paying BPX's $1-billion construction costs. Although the deal is still tentative, Italian government and industry officials appear to be keenly interested in a partnership. "It seems like there is a real possibility of getting together," says James Decker, acting director of DOE's Office of Energy Research.

Scholars Flock to a Proliferation of Fraud Conferences

■ Fraud is a growth industry, if a spate of conferences on the topic—like one planned this weekend at Harvard—is a fair index of what's to come in 1991.

The Harvard Medical School is hosting a group of experts who intend to ask themselves: What should the scientific community do with researchers penalized for scientific misdeeds? No one keeps data on the fate of such offenders, and some continue to do research and publish papers. Ethics-watchers, who argue that this situation is a fact of life in academia and that not all misdeeds are the kind that should end a career, say it's time to think of ways to "rehabilitate" violators once a penalty has been served. Participants also intend to debate due process for the accused and accuser, data ownership rights, prevention of misconduct, and enforcement of sanctions.

Since the issue of misconduct isn't about to go away, academics are eager to make the most of it. This conference is just one of nearly half a dozen on the subject scheduled through April—a clear indication that the fraud circuit is booming.

NIH-Sponsored Scientific Misconduct Conferences

Date	Location	Host
2-3 February	Cambridge, MA	Harvard Medical School
14-15 March	Washington, DC	NIH
25-26 March	Seattle, WA	NIH
15-16 April	New Orleans, LA	NIH
25-26 April	St. Louis, MO	Washington University

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