

To: d.l.dwoyer
From: "Mark J. Shuart" <m.j.shuart@pop.larc.nasa.gov>
Subject: Fwd: RE: Main Gear Breach Concerns
Cc:
Bcc:
X-Attachments:

Doug,

Here's the latest from JSC on the damage to the orbiter tiles. Looks like they believe all has been addressed.....Mark

From: "LECHNER, DAVID F. (JSC-DF52) (USA)" <david.f.lechner1@jsc.nasa.gov>
To: "'Robert H. Daugherty'" <r.h.daugherty@larc.nasa.gov>
Cc: M.J.SHUART@larc.nasa.gov, H.M.ADELMAN@larc.nasa.gov,
"CAMPBELL, CARLISLE C., JR (JSC-ES2) (NASA)"
<carlisle.c.campbell@nasa.gov>
Subject: RE: Main Gear Breach Concerns
Date: Fri, 31 Jan 2003 12:17:34 -0600

Bob,

I really appreciate the candid remarks. As always your points have generated extremely valuable discussion in our group. Thank you. We have been discussing and continue to discuss the all possible scenarios, signatures and decisions. Your input is beneficial. Like everyone, we hope that the debris impact analysis is correct and all this discussion is mute.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Robert H. Daugherty [<mailto:r.h.daugherty@larc.nasa.gov>]
Sent: Thursday, January 30, 2003 5:23 PM
To: LECHNER, DAVID F. (JSC-DF52) (USA)
Cc: M.J.SHUART@larc.nasa.gov; H.M.ADELMAN@larc.nasa.gov; CAMPBELL, CARLISLE C., JR (JSC-ES2) (NASA)
Subject: Main Gear Breach Concerns

Hi David,

I talked to Carlisle a bit ago and he let me know you guys at MOD were getting into the loop on the tile damage issue. I'm writing this email not really in an official capacity but since we've worked together so many times I feel like I can say pretty much anything to you. And before I begin I would offer that I am admittedly erring way on the side of absolute worst-case scenarios and I don't really believe things are as bad as I'm getting ready to make them out. But I certainly believe that to not be ready for a gut-wrenching decision after seeing instrumentation in the wheel well not be there after entry is irresponsible. One of my personal theories is that you should seriously consider the possibility of the gear

not deploying at all if there is a substantial breach of the wheel well. The reason might be that as the temps increase, the wheel (aluminum) will lose material properties as it heats up and the tire pressure will increase. At some point the wheel could fail and send debris everywhere. While it is true there are thermal fuses in the wheel, if the rate of heating is high enough, since the tire is such a good insulator, the wheel may degrade in strength enough to let go far below the 1100 psi or so that the tire normally bursts at. It seems to me that with that much carnage in the wheel well, something could get screwed up enough to prevent deployment and then you are in a world of hurt. The following are scenarios that might be possible...and since there are so many of them, these are offered just to make sure that some things don't slip thru the cracks...I suspect many or all of these have been gone over by you guys already:

1. People talk about landing with two flat tires...I did too until this came up. If both tires blew up in the wheel well (not talking thermal fuse and venting but explosive decomp due to tire and/or wheel failure) the overpressure in the wheel well will be in the 40 + psi range. The resulting loads on the gear door (a quarter million lbs) would almost certainly blow the door off the hinges or at least send it out into the slip stream...catastrophic. Even if you could survive the heating, would the gear now deploy? And/or also, could you even reach the runway with this kind of drag?
2. The explosive bungies...what might be the possibility of these firing due to excessive heating? If they fired, would they send the gear door and/or the gear into the slipstream?
3. What might excessive heating do to all kinds of other hardware in the wheel well...the hydraulic fluid, uplocks, etc? Are there vulnerable hardware items that might prevent deployment?
4. If the gear didn't deploy (and you would have to consider this before making the commitment to gear deploy on final) what would happen control-wise if the other gear is down and one is up? (I think Howard Law and his community will tell you you're finished)
5. Do you belly land? Without any other planning you will have already committed to KSC. And what will happen during derotation in a gear up landing (trying to stay away from an asymmetric gear situation for example) since you will be hitting the aft end body flap and wings and pitching down extremely fast a la the old X-15 landings? My guess is you would have an extremely large vertical decel situation up in the nose for the crew. While directional control would be afforded in some part by the drag chute...do you want to count on that to keep you out of the moat?
6. If a belly landing is unacceptable, ditching/bailout might be next on the list. Not a good day.
7. Assuming you can get to the runway with the gear deployed but with two flat tires, can the commander control the vehicle both in pitch and lateral directions? One concern is excessive drag (0.2 g's) during TD throughout the entire saddle region making the derotation uncontrollable due to saturated elevons...resulting in nose gear failure? The addition of crosswinds would make lateral control a tough thing too. Simulating this, because it is so ridiculously easy to do (sims going on this very minute at AMES with load-persistence) seems like a real no-brainer.

Admittedly this is over the top in many ways but this is a pretty bad time to get surprised and have to make decisions in the last 20 minutes. You can count on us to provide any support you think you need.

Best Regards,
Bob