

NEWS

THE OVERSEAS
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
COMMISSION
(AUSTRALIA)



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ASTRONAUTS COMMENT ON ARIA SUCCESS

The success of one link in the massive chain of Apollo 11 communications resulted in a "pat on the back" from the astronauts for a small group of O.T.C. technicians.

The link was established during Apollo 11's second orbit of the earth just before the trans lunar injection burn when the Apollo capsule set course for the moon.

The link was a tenuous one.

Two Aria (Apollo Range Instrumented Aircraft) Boeing 707's flying over the Northern Territory and New Guinea locked their special tracking dishes on to the space craft as it moved out of the visibility of the Carnarvon tracking station.

Voice and data transmissions received from the space craft were relayed directly to the O.T.C. high frequency radio receiving and transmitting stations at Bringelly and Doonside, outside Sydney.

Transmissions were then relayed to the special Aria monitoring console set up in the Overseas Telecommunications Terminal at Paddington and then directly to the Apollo Mission Centre in Houston, Texas.

"The link was extremely clear and crisp," one of the O.T.C. team said later.

"The astronauts had nothing much to say at the time but they did comment on the clarity of the Aria communications."

In fact, Houston felt that the transmissions via the Aria aircraft were of such interest that they released the tapes for broadcast across the United States.

The Aria aircraft are used to keep the Apollo capsule in communication with the Mission Control Centre when it can not be "seen" by land or sea based tracking stations.

During Apollo 11 the aircraft were used to fill in communications "gaps" in the Australian area as this was the region over which the vital trans lunar injection burn.

The aircraft will also be used during the re-entry and splash-down period at the completion of the mission.

The O.T.C. crew have been working successfully with the Aria aircraft since the first manned Apollo mission - Apollo 7, ensuring that the astronauts always have a link with home.