

HONR269i

To the Moon and Back: The Apollo Program

Discussion Questions

Session 12: Launch Operations

1. In June, 1967 the General Accounting Office (GAO, an investigative arm of the Congress) forwarded a draft report to NASA for comment in which they asserted that argued that NASA could have saved \$55 million by assembling Saturn V rockets on the launch pad (with as many more launch pads as would have been needed) rather than assembling them using the Vehicle Assembly Building and a mobile launcher. How should NASA have replied to the GAO in their written comments on the report? Should they have agreed? Disagreed? On what basis?
2. NASA had a couple of thousand employees at the Kennedy Space Center, but NASA contractors had ten times that number of people working there. What were the advantages to NASA of using a large contractor workforce to assemble, test and launch the Apollo missions? What were the disadvantages?
3. What would have turned out differently if NASA had chosen to put the launch site for Apollo on Cumberland Island in Georgia? Would they have used the mobile launch concept there? Would we have landed on the Moon by 1969? Would it have cost more? Or less?