

Oberg-Fobos-Dec02: Euros Quit Futile Comm Attempts

Jim Oberg advises:

0. This story has gotten BIG but hasn't made the wires yet.
1. FLASH news: As anticipated in my advisory two days ago, the European Space Agency has decided to give up on its futile two-week effort to help Russia get control over its stranded Mars probe.
2. The termination of ESA's hi-tech network support, and NASA's support is probably also going to be ended, is the last nail in the coffin of this probe. The last hope, the last chance has died.
3. As confirmed on a twitter news feed from 'ESA Operations' within the hour, "In consultation and agreement with #PhobosGrunt mission controllers [in Moscow], ESA engineers will end #ESTRACK [European Space Track] ground station support today."
4. Aside from a few bursts of radio tone and MAYBE fragments of unreadable telemetry, neither the Europeans nor the Russian tracking sites have been able to get the probe to respond to queries for data, or to perform an orbit-raising burn to a stabler, more radio-friendly orbit.
5. We now proceed into the END GAME of the uncontrolled fall of a satellite with eleven tons of toxic, explosive chemicals on board.
6. Best guesses for atmospheric entry are in the second week of January.
7. By the way, the rumor that NASA had been forbidden to assist the rescue effort because of the Chinese subsatellite on board have been officially denied to me by Bob Jacobs of NASA HQ, on the record.