

Oberg-Fobos-Nov14-Criticizing-Moscow-Secrecy

From: James E Oberg Sent: Monday, November 14, 2011 4:19 PM

Jim Oberg advises re Fobos-Grunt status

12. .... -- Russian space officials are still being UN-candid if not deliberately misleading about their stranded Mars probe, launched six days ago, stuck in a decaying parking orbit around Earth, and still not responding to ground signals.

13. Barring a miracle it will crash to Earth in December or January with eleven tons of highly toxic fuel which most likely -- but not for certain -- will burn up safely in the atmosphere during the descent.

14. Russian space officials have resorted to Soviet-era data blackouts and authoritative 'trust us' decrees, that have persuaded nobody.

15. This sad setback for space science is an even bigger disaster for international cooperation because, in my view, it has revealed the true Russian instincts behind their cultivated public image.

16. When faced with disaster, don't ask partners for help, don't tell the full extent of the problem, downplay any dangers, hide from the western media, and hope outsiders lose interest and go away. That's the old Soviet way, accentuated perhaps because the head of their civilian space program is a military general [the second such military officer in a row].

17. And the probe still circles up there over our heads, with no candor of how likely it is to crash, and what may happen if it does. Doubly sad because in so many other areas of space cooperation, the Russians were gradually evolving in the right directions towards normal international give-and-take.