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RELEASE ON RECEIPT  
February 22, 1968

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Information Services (Ext 215)

ATMOSPHERIC SPECTROMETER (INFRARED) GETS FIRST FLIGHT TEST NEXT WEEK; MAY EVOLVE INTO SATELLITE INSTRUMENT WITH HIGH VALUE IN WEATHER FORECASTING

HOUSTON --

A Dallas scientist will take the temperature of the Earth's atmosphere over range lands, mountains and desert next week. From the first test, ranging from Houston to San Diego-Los Angeles and back, a satellite instrument may evolve that will have extremely high value in weather forecasting.

Dr. Brian Tinsley, New Zealand-born space physicist at the Southwest Center for Advanced Studies in Dallas, is at Houston's NASA-Manned Spacecraft Center today (FRIDAY, FEB. 23) to install a down-looking atmospheric spectrometer in a P-3A prop-jet airplane operated by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The militarized version of Lockheed's Electra will be flown from Houston to the California coast and back within the week beginning February 25. Operating at about 30,000 feet, the flight will be above two-thirds of the Earth's atmosphere.

Doctor Tinsley's experiment test will aim at recording the vertical temperature structure of the atmosphere below, recording infrared emissions above the various types of terrain.

His eventual hope, he says, is to produce a satellite instrument that can look at the atmosphere from much higher altitudes, and have "extremely high value in weather forecasting."