Corona Film Roll

Corona was America's first satellite reconnaissance system which was operational as a Top Secret Program from 1960 to 1972. The enclosed 70-mm roll of black and white film is a duplicate negative copy of an original negative film flown on Corona Mission #1025, launched on 5 October 1965. It was given to Kodak optics engineering manager, Charles Spoelhof, as a memento on the occasion of his being recognized as an NRO Pioneer at the National Reconnaissance Office's 40th Anniversary Celebration in Chantilly, VA on 27 September 2000. He was cited as one of 46 "NRO Pioneers" who made significant and lasting contributions to national reconnaissance through his leadership in applying Kodak technologies to overhead systems. Mr. Spoelhof retired as a Kodak Vice President in 1986.

Although the film header carries the designation TOP SECRET, the Corona Program was declassified on 22 February 1995, as indicated on the can cover and the spool.

Designations shown on the can, can cover and spool flange labels are as follows:

1025-2 is the Mission Number. It identifies the film as having come from the Corona Program (1000 series of missions), and in particular, the 25th mission. The “2” indicates that it was from the mission's second Recovery Vehicle (RV). The KH-4A configuration carried two recovery vehicles which were separately ejected from orbit for mid-air recovery by an aircraft after each one was filled with exposed negative film. The first RV from this mission was recovered on 10 October 1965, and the second RV was recovered on 15 October 1965. 12 October 1965 is the date when the original negative film from which this roll was taken was exposed.

D-102 AFT identifies the pass (orbit) as the 102m1. The “D” indicates the pass as descending in its elliptical orbit, and AFT indicates that the exposures were taken by the aft-looking camera, there being both an AFT-looking and forward-looking camera in each satellite.

S.O. 153 is Eastman Kodak's film designation number, in this case a Fine Grain Aerial Duplicating Film. S.O. stands for Special Order which meant the film was not generally available as a standard item, but with enough lead time, could be purchased after a special coating run was made and the film slit to customer specifications. The number 153 identifies everything that was needed to produce the film including the film base, base thickness, the light-sensitive emulsion, any special coatings, the machine(s) it was to be coated on, etc.

3 D. Neg. identifies the film roll as a third-generation duplicate negative copy of the original negative film flown in the satellite. It was produced by first contact printing a second generation duplicate positive film roll, and then using that film to contact-print a third generation negative copy.

58777 TCS-381215 / 65 stamped in purple ink on the three labels is a control number which was applied by the receiving US Government agency (customer) for in-house control and cataloging of the film roll.
Frames numbered 076 to 120 are included in the roll. This film roll was originally generated at Kodak's Bridgehead operation and shipped to the customer in Box 2 of 3. The full story of Bridgehead has been documented in a 90-page booklet which was published in September 2011, on the occasion of the declassification of the Gambit and Hexagon Systems. A copy of "Bridgehead, The Story of Its Role in the Early Overhead Programs of the National Reconnaissance Office (1955-2000)" is part of the Kodak Archive in Rush Rhees Library. Copies are also available in branches of the Monroe County Library System.

Designations appearing on the header of the film roll include the following:

- MISSION NO. 1025-2AFT PASS D102 as explained above
- PART 2 OF 3 identifies the imagery as being taken in the second of a burst of three series of exposures.
- HEAD identifies that end of the roll as the head end.
- RUFF was a code-name used for classifying Top Secret materials within the customer's operation.

Many of the above designations also appear along the film edge adjacent to each frame of imagery.

R.D.

Sherwood

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