

MAY 17, 2009

DEAR LISA NOWAK,

PLEASE ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. MY NAME IS MAYA LUJAN, I AM A PROFESSIONAL ARTIST LIVING IN LOS ANGELES. I AM HIGHLY INTERESTED IN ASTRONOMY AND NASA. I IMPLEMENT CONCEPTS OF "SPACE" INTO MY PRACTICE. I AM WRITING TO YOU BECAUSE I THINK THAT YOU MAY OFFER VALUABLE INSIGHT INTO THE CONTEMPORARY ISSUE OF GUNS IN SPACE BASED ON DEEP CONSIDERATION AND EXPERIENCE.

THE SPACE PRESERVATION ACT OF 2005 BANNED GUNS AND WEAPONS IN SPACE IN ORDER TO, " PRESERVE THE COOPERATIVE, PEACEFUL USES OF SPACE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL HUMANKIND BY PROHIBITING THE BRANDISHING OF WEAPONS IN SPACE AND THE USE OF WEAPONS TO DESTROY OR DAMAGE OBJECTS IN SPACE THAT ARE IN ORBIT." HOWEVER, IN 2006, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH SIGNED A REGULATION REINSTATING THE U.S. RIGHT TO USE SPACE WEAPONS. MEANWHILE, RUSSIA HAS BEEN PROMOTING A TREATY BANNING WEAPONS IN SPACE, YET IT FEATURES A SPECIAL PROVISION KEEPING THEIR WEAPONS IMPLEMENTED AS WELL AS PRE-EXISTING GUNS REMAINING ABOARD THEIR SHUTTLES. CURRENTLY, THE RUSSIANS HAVE AN AUTOMATIC CANNON ABOARD THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION AND AT LEAST ONE HANDGUN OF VARIOUS FUNCTIONS ON THE SOYUZ SPACECRAFT. THEY CLAIM TO NEED THE WEAPONS FOR OFF-RADAR LANDINGS IN REMOTE SIBERIAN WILDERNESS FOR PROTECTION FROM WOLVES, ALTHOUGH THE OCCURRENCES OF WOLVES ATTACKING HUMANS ARE QUITE RARE. THE USE OF GUNS ON RUSSIAN SHUTTLES BEGAN IN 1965, "FOR DEFENSE AGAINST US SPACE BASED INSPECTORS AND INTERCEPTORS" DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE COLD WAR. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS JUSTIFIED PARANOIA STILL PERSISTS, THE AMMUNITION REMAINS STASHED, AND THE RUSSIANS KEEP WITH TRADITION BY BEING AMBIGUOUS AS TO THE DEGREE OF THEIR SPACE TRAINING WITH GUNS. IN FACT, IT IS TRADITION TO PRESENT THE SPACE GUN AS A GIFT TO THE SUCCESSIVE SOYUZ SPACECRAFT COMMANDER UPON LANDING.

REGARDING THE PHYSICS OF GUNS FUNCTIONING IN SPACE, MY INVESTIGATIONS FOUND THAT NOT ONLY WOULD A GUN FUNCTION PROPERLY IN THE ABSENCE OF GRAVITY BUT QUITE POSSIBLY, BETTER THAN ON EARTH. ESSENTIALLY, LOWERED AIR FRICTION SPEEDS UP A BULLET, AND WEIGHTLESSNESS PROVES TO BE INCONSEQUENTIAL. THE SHUTTLE'S ORBITAL MANEUVERING ENGINES IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE REACTION CONTROL SYSTEM (WHICH REGULATES GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT), WOULD WORK TO CANCEL OUT RECOIL THRUST ON THE BULLET. THE EXPLODING GUNPOWDER WOULD STILL PUSH THE BULLET AWAY FROM THE BARREL OF THE GUN, AND THE FORCE WOULD THROW THE ASTRONAUT USING THE GUN IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. THE BULLET WOULD GO FASTER AND NOT FALL, BUT LOOSE IT'S CAPACITY TO MAKE IMPACT SOONER, UNLESS, OF COURSE, THERE INEVITABLY WERE, AN OBJECT OR PERSON TO STOP IT. THIS WOULD PRESENT A POINT OF ABSOLUTE CRISIS, AND THE LIFE OF THE SHOOTER (IT WOULD HAVE TO BE A SUICIDE MISSION), THE ENTIRE CREW AND THE SHUTTLE WOULD BE SADLY BE LOST IN A DISASTROUS AND VIOLENT MANNER.

WE NOW KNOW THAT ASTRONAUTS CAN HAVE CERTAIN PROBLEMS, REGARDLESS OF SCREENING PROCESSES, EDUCATION, OR RELIGION. LIKE THE REST OF THE POPULATION, ASTRONAUTS ARE, JUST ORDINARY PEOPLE. THEY ARE CAPABLE OF SOMETIMES MAKING BAD EMOTIONAL DECISIONS AND ARE PRONE TO THE SAME WEAKNESSES OF OBSESSION, LOVE SICKNESS, AND THE INABILITY TO SEPARATE PERSONAL FROM PROFESSIONAL MATTERS. IF THE STRESSES OF SPACE TRAVEL IN THEMSELVES MAY PROVE TO TEST AN ASTRONAUT'S MENTAL STATE AND CREATE A SCENARIO WHERE UNDETECTED MENTAL ILLNESS OR ANGUISH MAY BE INVOLVED; DO YOU THINK THAT THERE IS A SERIOUS THREAT REGARDING THE CAPACITY FOR AN ASTRONAUT TO USE THE GUN AS A WEAPON? WHAT ARE THE SIGNIFICANT ETHICAL REPERCUSSIONS OF HAVING GUNS IN SPACE? DO YOU THINK THERE SHOULD THERE BE A MORATORIUM OF GUNS IN SPACE? I WOULD BE HONORED IF YOU COULD REPLY TO THIS LETTER, AS I WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION.

THANK YOU SO MUCH,

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