

COLUMBIA / TWO ACCOUNTS OF ONE PROGRAM

1981-1982 | STS-1 through STS-4 | Beter's claims and NASA records

On television, a reusable spacecraft opens a new era. On Peter David Beter's tapes, a hidden struggle for military access to space unfolds. This dossier follows the evolution of his account through Columbia's first four orbital test flights.

1**THE TEST PROGRAM****Documented flights, crews and technical problems**

Begin with Enterprise, thermal tiles and engine tests. The real risk of a first orbital flight is an essential part of the story.

2**THE ALTERNATIVE SCENARIO****AL62, 64, 65, 68, 70, 72, 73 and 76**

A predicted secret payload, alleged losses and substitutes, then a claimed success. Each stage has its date and its own burden of evidence.

3**THE MILITARY CONNECTION****The real STS-4 payload and interpretive limits**

The program served civilian and defense purposes. An acknowledged military experiment does not prove alleged battles with cosmospheres.

THE TIME FRAME

This dossier concerns the early flights of 1981-1982, not the STS-107 disaster of 2003. Images of secret operations illustrate Beter's scenario; they are not authentic photographs or technical plans.

SOURCES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Audio Letter transcripts establish what Beter claimed. Contemporary documents, archives and institutional histories provide separate verification and context. Captions are editorial paraphrases; images are newly created illustrations. Full references are in Sources.pdf and Sources.txt attached to the PDF and included in the ZIP.

Sources: Sources.txt / source register and verification notes.

www.peterdavidbeter.com

EDITORIAL OVERVIEW - Beter's narrative does not establish the alleged secret operations.

01 / A SPACECRAFT LEARNS TO FLY

Before the allegations: the real engineering challenge.



1 A new beginning

Columbia arrived in Florida in March 1979. A reusable winged spacecraft promised a different route into orbit, but bringing that promise to flight required years of testing.



2 The fragile shield

The thermal tiles were a genuine engineering concern. Beter acknowledged the debate, but in AL62 also interpreted the delays as cover for a Soviet military blockade of space.



3 More than twenty seconds

AL62 emphasized the short firing on the pad. NASA records also document years of ground tests, including full-duration firings of the three-engine propulsion test assembly.



4 Enterprise was a glider

In 1977 Enterprise made five free approach-and-landing flights. Its engines were dummies and its surface simulated a heat shield. These tests were atmospheric, not orbital.



5 Two men, one first flight

John Young and Robert Crippen crewed STS-1. The first orbital shuttle test carried people: a real and unusually demanding flight-test decision, not evidence by itself of a hidden payload.



6 12 April 1981

Columbia lifted off from Pad 39A and returned to Edwards on 14 April. NASA identifies its payload as flight-test instrumentation; Beter would describe a radically different mission.

Sources: AL62; NASA STS-1, MPTA history, Enterprise ALT

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COMIC VISUALIZATION - Beter's account; does not establish the allegations as historical fact.

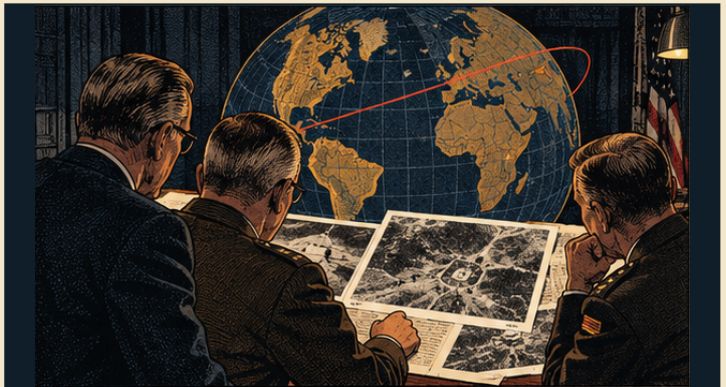
02 / THE MISSION BETER PREDICTED

AL62, 28 February 1981: an allegation made before STS-1.



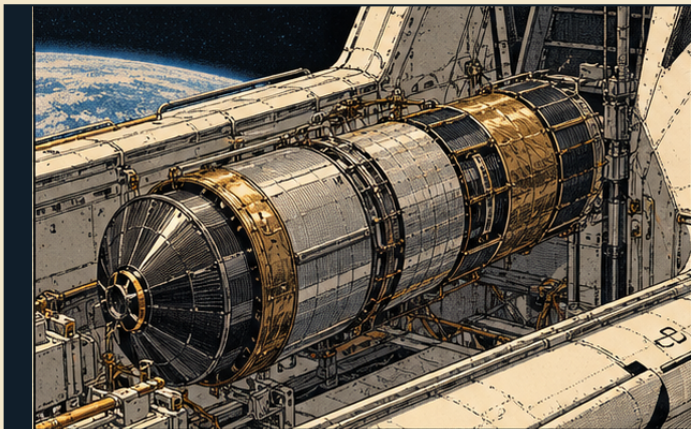
1 Before launch

Beter presented his account weeks before STS-1. Its premise was that Soviet space weapons had destroyed American reconnaissance coverage and the shuttle would try to restore it.



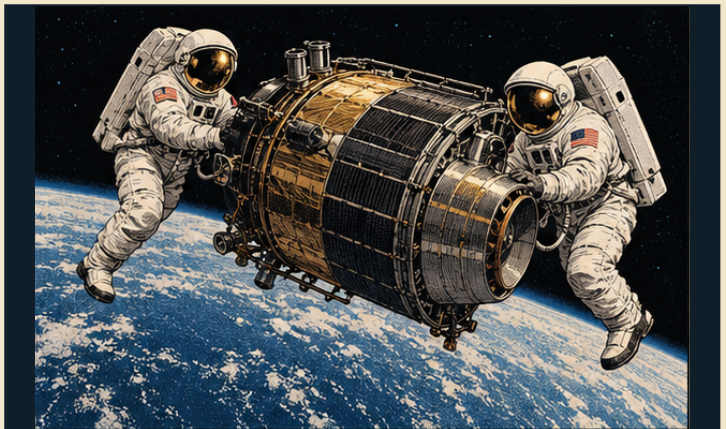
2 A military motive

He linked the alleged reconnaissance mission to preparations for a nuclear first strike. This motive belongs to his wider geopolitical theory; the cited letter supplies no independently testable operational records.



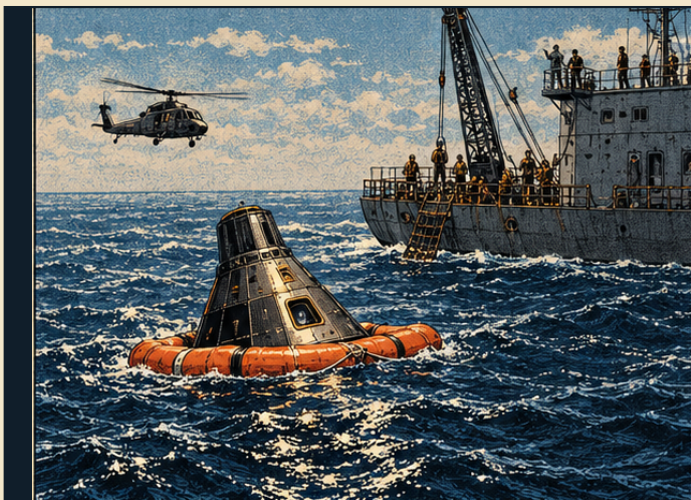
3 An armored satellite

His proposed payload was an automated reconnaissance battle station, protected by nested tungsten shells and armed with a laser. The illustration is conceptual, not a recovered design or verified spacecraft.



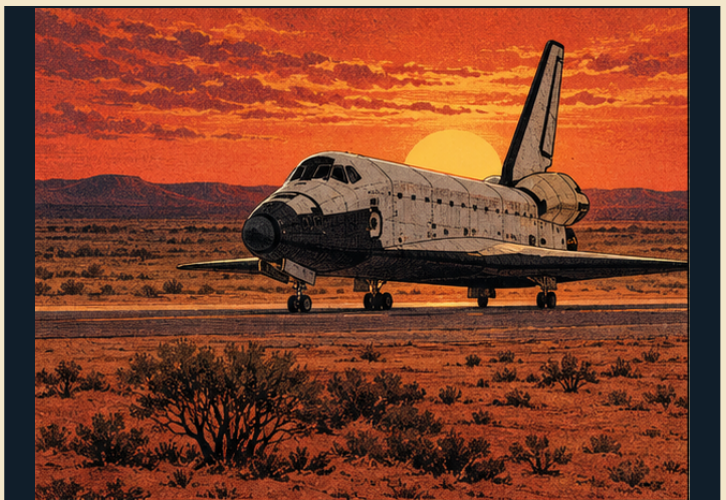
4 Work outside the shuttle

In his projected sequence, Young and Crippen would assemble the satellite in space. NASA's STS-1 account instead records a vehicle test with instrumentation, not such an assembly mission.



5 A separate return

Beter said a Gemini-like capsule would bring the crew secretly to the Pacific while television showed prerecorded scenes. This was part of his forecast, not an independently documented rescue.



6 Two landing stories

He predicted Columbia's secret landing in western Australia and an Enterprise stand-in at Edwards. Keep this original scenario distinct from his later claim that Columbia had been destroyed.

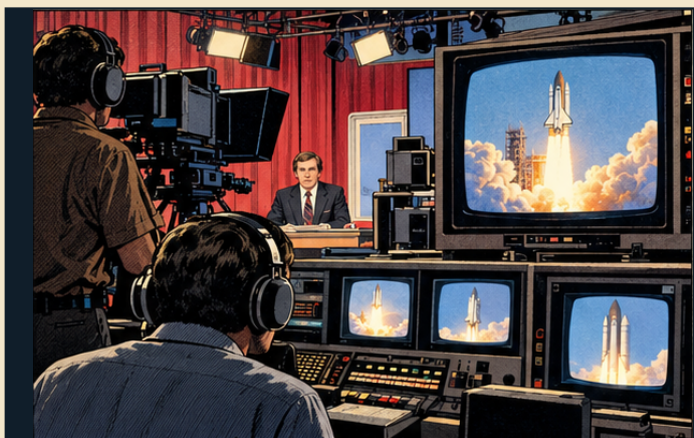
Sources: AL62 topic 1; NASA STS-1 mission assessment

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COMIC VISUALIZATION - Beter's account; does not establish the allegations as historical fact.

03 / AFTER STS-1: A DIFFERENT STORY

AL64 and AL65: alleged interception, substitutes and concealment.



1 Television as the stage

In AL64 Beter claimed the broadcast switched to prepared audio and simulated images. A change of commentary or an ambiguous shadow does not by itself establish that an entire mission was staged.



2 An alleged interception

He described seven huge Soviet "Super Heavy" cosmo-spheres intercepting the shuttle. His claimed northerly flight path differs from NASA's recorded STS-1 orbit, inclined about 40.3 degrees.



3 The claimed loss

Beter alleged that neutron beams killed Young and Crippen and disrupted the vehicle. NASA records their return and later careers. The letter offers no independently authenticated evidence for the alleged deaths.



4 Not the 2003 accident

He placed the alleged breakup over Soviet territory in April 1981. This is a different claim from the documented Columbia accident on 1 February 2003, more than twenty-one years later.



5 A chain of replacements

He invoked Enterprise, human replicas and hidden replacement orbiters. AL65 then interpreted ferry-flight delays as disagreement over the next mission. Each added claim requires evidence of its own.



6 A testable distinction

Enterprise's documented construction contradicts the claimed powered suborbital role. Mission reports and vehicle records supply evidence to examine; the illustration supplies none.

Sources: AL64 all topics; AL65 topic 2; NASA STS-1 and Enterprise records

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COMIC VISUALIZATION - Beter's account; does not establish the allegations as historical fact.

04 / STS-2: THE SHORTENED FLIGHT

November 1981: a real fuel-cell failure and a competing interpretation.



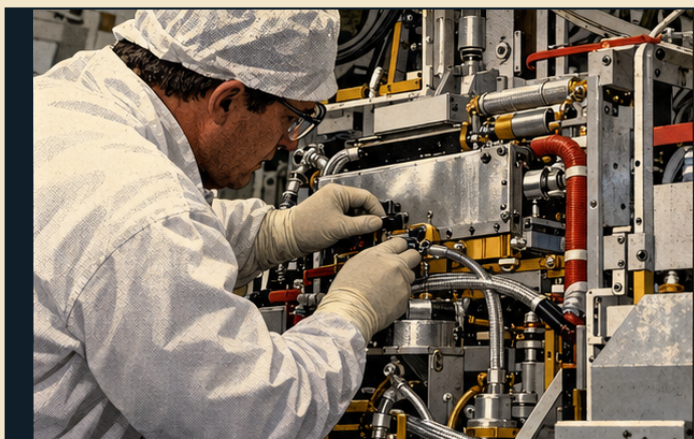
1 Delays on the pad

AL68 treated a nitrogen-tetroxide spill and tile work as deliberate stalling. NASA's chronology records the spill, repairs and further technical delays before the November launch.



2 A second crew

Joe Engle and Richard Truly launched on 12 November 1981. STS-2 tested whether the same orbiter could fly again; it also carried Earth-observation instruments and the Canadian robotic arm.



3 Why return early?

A fuel cell failed. NASA shortened the planned five-day flight to a little over two days. The recorded technical fault is not equivalent to Beter's claim that the short mission was prearranged deception.



4 Useful tests continued

The crew still carried out much of the test program, including the first orbital tests of the arm. A shortened mission can have both a significant malfunction and valuable results.



5 Beter's new version

AL70 said Enterprise itself flew a reconnaissance mission and was destroyed by beams from modified Tu-144 aircraft. That account replaced the earlier projected abort; it is not supported by the cited flight records.



6 The documented return

Columbia landed at Edwards on 14 November. Beter described reused television footage and another substitute shuttle. A theory of repeated substitutions needs more than its own explanation of every contrary record.

05 / STS-3: A LANDING AT WHITE SANDS

March 1982: engineering tests, weather and the alleged first secret success.



1 22 March 1982

Jack Lousma and Gordon Fullerton began Columbia's third orbital test. NASA's record gives an orbit inclined 38 degrees; Beter again described a hidden route far to the north.



2 A demanding week

The flight included thermal tests and scientific experiments. Crew illness and equipment problems were reported. Beter interpreted such reports as prepared excuses in case the alleged military mission failed.



3 What was in the bay?

NASA documents the OSS-1 science pallet and robotic-arm work. In AL72 Beter had instead forecast extensive laser armament and an armored reconnaissance satellite. These are distinct descriptions, not interchangeable labels.



4 A claimed success

In AL73 he said the satellite was deployed and the shuttle left in orbit while its crew returned in a capsule. He connected that supposed success to his "Project Z" war scenario.



5 Weather changed the plan

Rain left Edwards unsuitable. White Sands became the alternate landing site; strong winds then delayed landing by a day. NASA's account and a participant's oral history describe the troublesome gypsum dust.



6 30 March: touchdown

Columbia landed at Northrup Strip after eight days. Beter saw a substitute arriving from a secret base. White Sands' documented support role is real; it does not establish his alleged concealed fleet.

06 / STS-4: THE REAL MILITARY CONNECTION

A documented defense payload does not verify a secret space war.



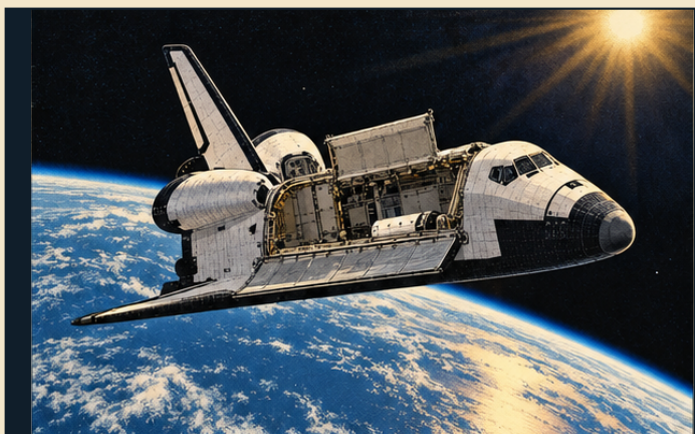
1 Defense was on the manifest

STS-4 carried the first shuttle payload sponsored by the US Department of Defense. NASA's later history identifies CIRIS, an infrared instrument intended to study Earth's limb and atmospheric background.



2 The final test crew

Ken Mattingly and Henry Hartsfield launched on 27 June 1982. Their program combined vehicle testing, defense research and civilian experiments. The shuttle's military connection need not be denied to examine Beter critically.



3 Two different sensor stories

AL76 claimed a sensor would be placed in geostationary orbit to confirm a nuclear strike. The documented CIRIS experiment remained a shuttle payload and malfunctioned. These accounts must not be conflated.



4 Failures in the public record

The solid-booster casings were lost after parachute failures. Rainwater in tiles prompted a change in thermal testing. NASA's record contains setbacks as well as successes, not a flawless performance story.



5 4 July 1982

The fourth test ended on Edwards' concrete runway. Beter's AL76 had been recorded on 30 June, while the flight was still underway: its claims must be read with that timing in mind.



6 What remains to establish?

Beter left a detailed alternative narrative. The sources examined here do not establish his hidden losses, substitutes or battles. Columbia's documented history continues beyond 1982; the 2003 loss is a separate event.

TIMELINE / EVENTS AND CLAIMS

Documented events are distinguished from dates in Beter’s narrative.

DATE	EVENT / SOURCE	SIGNIFICANCE / CLAIM
1977	Enterprise: five free flights	Atmospheric approach and landing tests.
28 Feb 1981	AL62: a secret mission forecast	Alleged satellite and separate crew return.
12-14 Apr 1981	STS-1: Young / Crippen	Documented first orbital Columbia flight.
27 Apr / 6 Jun 1981	AL64 and AL65	Beter alleges vehicle loss and substitutes.
30 Sep 1981	AL68: next-launch dispute	Technical delays interpreted as cover.
12-14 Nov 1981	STS-2: Engle / Truly	Fuel-cell failure shortens flight; AL70 adds a different account.
22-30 Mar 1982	STS-3: Lousma / Fullerton	White Sands; AL72 and AL73 describe an alleged combat mission.
27 Jun-4 Jul 1982	STS-4: Mattingly / Hartsfield	DOD payload; AL76 is recorded during the flight.
1 Feb 2003	Loss of STS-107	A separate, later event; not Beter’s 1981 narrative.

READ CLOSELY, TEST SPECIFIC CLAIMS

The crucial question is whether independently testable evidence supports a claim. Military research can genuinely be secret; that does not make every detailed alternative account an established fact.