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Author: Dr. Pablo de Leon
University of North Dakota, United States, deleon@ate.org

THE CONDOR PROJECT

Abstract

This paper covers the history of the Argentine C3ndor I and C3ndor II missiles: their origins, their development, and the circumstances that led to their cancellation.

The C3ndor I and II rockets were developed and built by the Argentine Air Force between 1979 and 1990. From the beginning of the 1960s to the end of the 1980s, Argentina was the only Latin American country to accomplish significant developments in rocketry.

During the last years of the military Junta, and the first years of the government of Ra3ul Alfons3n, an important investment in infrastructure and equipment was made. The training of hundreds of rocket specialists allowed Argentina to master solid propellant rocket manufacturing, as well as TVC flexible nozzle design and manufacturing, hypersonic, guidance and control, and more. These "dual use" technologies could be utilized for missiles, as well as for space launch systems.

Despite the fact that the C3ndor rocket motor was fully developed and operational, in the beginning of the 1990s the government of Carlos Menem decided to cancel the project, and disperse the engineers and technicians involved. This was done mainly due to international pressures and marked the beginning of a decade of "automatic alignment" of Argentine policies with those of the United States. The cancellation of the C3ndor program had long lasting effects in the Argentine space program in general, and in the development of regional solid rocket propulsion systems in particular.