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The issues before the Administrator of NASA are as follows:

1. The Administrator’s role in successfully completing the Apollo 13 mission
2. The Administrator’s role in managing the unanticipated outcome of the Apollo 13 mission outside of NASA

Topic I: Successfully Completing the Apollo 13 Mission

The Administrator has overseen six successful Apollo missions, including the very first Moon landing. This seventh Apollo mission was slated as routine procedure but it is clear to the Administrator that due to either an anomaly in instrumentation readings or a severe error in the oxygen tanks themselves, the Apollo 13 mission is likely to deviate from its intended program in both course and objective.

In order to create a workable solution to the current issues aboard the Command Module, the Administrator acknowledges that teamwork within the many departments of NASA will be key. The Administrator believes in the capabilities, knowledge, and experience of both the ground crew and the astronauts, and is confident in the Administration’s aptitude in creating new and innovative solutions.

The possible harm to any member of NASA due to equipment malfunction or any other preventable cause is extremely concerning to the Administrator. However, the Administrator’s first and foremost priority is completing a successful mission within an acceptable level of risk, including the completion of the primary objectives of Apollo 13: “performing selenological inspection, surveying, and sampling of materials in a preselected region of the Fra Mauro formation; deploying and activating an Apollo lunar surface experiments package; further developing human capability to work in the lunar environment; and obtaining photographs of candidate exploration sites.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Therefore, there is an acceptable level of risk to the astronauts that is yet to be surpassed in order to jeopardize these objectives. Once there is clarity on both the manner and severity of the malfunction, the risk to both the astronauts and the objectives can be re-assessed, and a decision can be made on whether or not the objectives can be completed. The Administrator discourages aborting the mission in any sense unless absolutely necessary, although acknowledges that prioritizing and compromising will be necessary due to the decreased functionality of the Command Module.

Therefore, the Administrator Thomas Paine

1. **Notes with deep concern the increased danger to NASA astronauts Jim Lovell, Jack Swigert, and Fred Haise**
2. **Reaffirms the importance of completing Apollo 13’s primary objectives**
3. **Solemnly affirms that an aborted mission in order to return to Earth may be necessary if the Command Module is sufficiently damaged**
4. **Emphasizes the importance of teamwork within the many departments of the Administration in order to find a workable solution to the problem**

Topic II: Managing the Outcome of the Apollo 13 Mission

The Apollo program has always been a source of pride for both NASA and the Government of the United States. Its success in being the first nation to put a man on the moon has placed it as the undisputed leader in the “Space Race” against the USSR. Although this third mission set to land on the moon is being viewed as commonplace by some, the undisputable truth is that the success of the space program is deeply rooted into the morale of America itself, especially during a time when American morals are being deeply and unequivocally attacked by the Soviets.

Should the Command Module’s malfunction result in dire circumstances that cause mission failure, the Administrator believes that not only would it harm NASA’s credibility and reputation, but the entire credibility and reputation of American science as it currently stands. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has never lost an astronaut in space before and such an event would be inexcusable to the Administrator, especially on a routine mission. Successfully completing the Apollo 13 mission despite the anomaly and/or instrumental failure on the Command Module will test and prove the ingenuity, knowledge, and passion that every NASA employee shares. Failure is not an option; not only are the lives of three astronauts on the line, but the reputation of American science and the morale of the American people rely on the success of the Apollo 13 mission.

Consequently, the Administrator will do everything in his power to ensure that the Apollo 13 mission is regarded as a success so as to not put into question America’s superiority in space aeronautics. No matter the outcome, the Administrator guarantees that, as with all malfunctions, the Apollo 13 mission will be learned from and investigated in order to prevent these circumstances from ever repeating themselves.

Therefore, the Administrator Thomas Paine

1. **Calls for a full investigation and review of the Command Module’s oxygen tanks and related instruments**
2. **Notes the importance of continued American excellence in NASA’s space program**

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1. http://history.nasa.gov/SP-4029/Apollo\_13a\_Summary.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-1)