

T + A FRIDAY 28-12-84

The first comet made by man

SCIENTISTS have sent an artificial comet streaking over the South Pacific and say the 15-minute firework could lead to more accurate weather forecasts.

A West German satellite, tracked by U.S. and British satellites, yesterday released a cloud of barium gas into space more than 70,000 miles above the Pacific Ocean west of Peru.

The result was a comet with a 7,500-mile long tail created when the barium collided with solar winds and charged particles from the sun to create the first man-made comet.

A scientist with the three-nation project said data gathered by computers of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) during the operation could help improve weather forecasting.

"If our experiments are successful, it may be possible to really have established this cause and effect relationship and have better weather predictions in the longer term," he said.

NASA officials said the experiment could help explain how solar winds affect weather and communications on earth.