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ARGON

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

13 August 1963

SUBJECT: Recall of ESCA TR's 63-¹/₂ and 63-²/₃

1. At 1100 hrs this date, [redacted] Security Officer DIA, called [redacted] OCE to advise that he was in receipt of a telephone message from the office of the Director, NRO (S), stating that all copies of referenced reports, which constitute the TK and A version of the ARGON-PRIME system be withdrawn from circulation.

2. Apparently no specific reason for withdrawal was stated other than the question of security involved in dissemination at this time. At the request of this office, [redacted] agreed to call the action officer NRO (S) and request a round-table meeting as soon as possible to determine reasons for the withdrawal. [redacted] called ESCA at approximately 1300 hrs to state that the action officer stated that he was not prepared to participate in such a discussion at this time as he wished to study the reports at greater length. He, the action officer, stated that a written directive re: recall of the documents would be in [redacted] hands by the close of business this date. At our request, [redacted] agreed to call this information to the attention of [redacted] however, [redacted] advised that we prepare a statement of the case to be used in reclaiming the action. He advised that this statement should include the necessary chronology, citation of pertinent correspondence and any verbal directions, and in general, all circumstances pertinent to the preparation and release of referenced documents.

3. This report is a direct outgrowth of a request made by Dr. Fubini, DDR&E at the conclusion of a "Mapping and Charting Technical Symposium" held on 9-10 October 1962 under the auspices of DDR&E. Confirmation of this requirement is contained in a Memorandum for the Chairman DDR&E Mapping and Charting Technical Symposium, dated 11 October 1962. In response to DDR&E's request the Office Chief of Engineers convened a working group under the Chairmanship of [redacted]. The report of this group dated 14 November 1962 recommended that a 12 inch focal length system combined with stellar camera offered the best hopes of achieving a cartographic system within the limitations furnished. Immediately after completion of the committee report, a briefing was compiled on this new system for which the title ARGON PRIME, the ARGON Follow-On system was coined. This briefing was presented to: ACSI, Navy, OCRD, The Assistant Secretary of Army (R&D), DIA, DDR&E and DNRO (S). On the occasion of the DNRO (S) briefing, Dr. Charyk, the Director, indicated that he was extremely pleased with the proposal, felt that it should immediately be undertaken and that in his capacity could initiate necessary action as a Follow-On program without further delay. On 14 December 1962, Dr. Charyk wrote ASA(R&D) confirming his satisfaction with the ARGON-PRIME and requesting a written analysis on its capabilities. A report containing all the essential data now in [redacted] was furnished on 20 Dec 1962.

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SUBJECT: Recall of [REDACTED]

Dr. Charyk's resignation was announced shortly thereafter but we were advised informally that he would direct the development of this system prior to leaving his office. After his leaving office it was determined that he had taken no such action but had left the decision up to his successor. It should be noted that Dr. Charyk on the occasion of his briefing on 29 November 1962 had directed that we do not seek DDR&E approval of this proposal inasmuch as the decision was entirely up to him. In late January 1963 it was discovered that ACIC, contrary to their Indian level agreement at the symposium that the ARGON PRIME offered the best hopes of a feasible cartographic system, had advised their superiors in AFCIN that existing systems were sufficient to meet requirements and that the ARGON PRIME was not needed. Upon receipt of this information we arranged for a working level meeting with ACIC personnel to discuss potential differences of opinion. This meeting was held on 5 February at ACIC and resulted in complete technical agreement that "there is no known basis to defer decision on the initiation of the ARGON PRIME Program."

4. In June of 1963, [REDACTED] ASA (R&D), becoming concerned at the inaction with respect to the ARGON PRIME directed OCE to prepare a technical bulletin on this system to embrace and expand upon the material covered in the December 1962 briefings noted above in order that he might have something positive to lay before DDR&E and others in order to solicit some support in the start of development. The TK version of this report was submitted by [REDACTED] to Dr. Fubini on 1 July 1963 with a request for comment and support. (No reply has been received from Dr. Fubini to this date - and due to the fact that [REDACTED] has been replaced by as yet an uncleared individual and that Dr. Fubini has assumed new responsibilities it is difficult to ascertain whether the matter is still under consideration in that office). In view of certain deficiencies in the TK version as well as the fact that the TK version could not be made available to "operationally-cleared" personnel in the R&D side of the house, an ARGON version of this report was prepared, and after consultation with [REDACTED] OCRD, distribution for information only was made to approximately ten (10) recipients having a legitimate interest in the program. Nothing further was heard of this action, except for verbal praise from DIA, Navy and various others until 13 August when we learned of the DNRO (S) stop order.

5. It is of interest to note that immediately after the excellent agreement reached in the ACIC-OCE meeting of 5 February, ACIC submitted to AFCIN a very damaging report completely reversing their agreements and recommending against any further action on the ARGON PRIME. Copy of this report was examined by [REDACTED] GIMRADA in the West Coast office of the Air Force Space Systems Division early in August 1963. [REDACTED] was promised a copy of this report at that time but no copy has been received to date. Coincidental to the circumstances and actions related above the Chief of Engineers established an AD HOC committee "To objectively study and advise the

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Chief of Engineers on the possible reorientation of the Corps of Engineers mapping and geodetic production capability to be responsive to modern military requirements in the near future (1965-1968)." Since at that time the prospects for early approval of the ARGON PRIME system appeared to be good, the committee spent considerable time analyzing the time and monetary savings which could be made by utilizing the ARGON PRIME acquisition system. It is interesting to note that this committee, in a report submitted to D/T&ME in July 1963 estimated a time saving of 75 to 85% in map compilation phases thru use of this material in the Universal processing equipment to be available to the Army Map Service in December 1965. It is hard to conclude anything but that these delays in approval of the ARGON PRIME system are exceedingly detrimental and ultimately costly to our National Defense posture.

[REDACTED]

References:

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