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6 MAY 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Science and Technology

SUBJECT : Comments on Dr. McMillan's Paper
re NRO Activities in General Search
Satellite Field

REFERENCE : [redacted]

1. On the whole, Dr. McMillan's paper does not contain statements which in themselves can be assailed; however, many of the statements are employed out of context, nor are all the facts chronologically recorded. There are considerable sins of omission, and to the casual observer one would get a warm glow of confidence in the NRO handling of the search requirement as opposed to the struggle which characteristically exists. We note the following observations:

A. In 1963 there were four [redacted] launches. Total target coverage numbered only 18.

B. Development of [redacted] was started without CIA or USIB knowledge. Once learned of by CIA, Dr. McMillan promised a feasibility study and assured the DCI that he would report before going into development. Without further word from Dr. McMillan, General Carter queried him in February 1965 as to the status of [redacted] and, although at first evasive, Dr. McMillan eventually admitted that [redacted] was under full-scale development.

C. Regarding the Purcell Panel, it should be noted that it was not up to the Purcell Panel to set search requirements nor would it, but rather it assessed the capabilities of existing and programmed systems to provide the coverage required.

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HANDLE VIA [redacted]
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[REDACTED]

The Panel was given a choice of the [REDACTED] System, which far exceeded the state-of-the-art and also required a TITAN IIIC if developed. The other two systems briefed to the Panel were M-2 and K-6, which promised five-foot resolution at best. The Panel was further informed that as far as photographic interpretation was concerned, unless one could get under five feet, then 10 feet was just as good as five. With this information in hand, the Panel could do little other than to conclude that since there were no programs in the wind which could promise under five-foot resolution, then the Government should devote its attention to improving CORONA to the extent where it would work well all the time. At that stage in time, CORONA resolution was varying between 10 and 20 feet.

D. Regarding Page 2, Paragraph 3 -

The two competitive proposals of which Dr. McMillan speaks date far beyond the Spring of 1963. M-2, for instance, had been proposed by the Agency as far back as January 1962. This effort was concluded following the Purcell Panel's recommendations.

E. Page 3, Paragraph 2 -

These competitive studies of which Dr. McMillan speaks were undertaken without Agency knowledge and only after it was proven by the Agency that such systems were feasible. There was also a contract with [REDACTED] which, when the Agency learned of it, Mr. McCone complained to Dr. McMillan and the contract was withdrawn.

F. Page 3, Paragraph 3 -

One could conclude that Eastman and Itek continued competitively since January 1965, and hence the decision to do so was prior to the Land Panel Report.

G. It would do well to observe that in reflecting upon Dr. McMillan's letter, that in April 1963 the NBO controlled all Agency funds.

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[REDACTED]

By June 1963 the CIA COMONA payload budget was transferred to the Air Force. In August 1963 the Air Force commenced a COMONA improvement program unilaterally; and since that time, the Agency has been without funds to pursue satellite development with the exception of [REDACTED] which it began with Agency funds and against the objection of the NSD.

(Signed)

John N. McMahon

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SFS/DDS&T**

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