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PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD

May 2, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: National Reconnaissance Program

The National Reconnaissance Program for the collection of photographic and signals intelligence through aircraft and satellite overflights is of vital importance to the national security and is likely to become increasingly so. The Program has produced most of our Government's information on Soviet deployment of land-based nuclear missiles and a great deal of highly valuable intelligence on other subjects.

Beginning with a small, closely-knit organization and operation concerned with relatively infrequent overflights by a few aircraft, the Program now encompasses the following: (1) ~~activity~~ activity involving hundreds of Government and contractor personnel; (2) the development and production of aircraft and their operation on reconnaissance missions, on a scale far in excess of that which marked early stages of the Program; (3) the procurement of boosters, orbital vehicles and camera payloads, and their integration for launching; (4) the launching of complex satellite mechanisms and the air-catch recovery by Air Force teams of payloads upon re-entry into the atmosphere; and (5) the technical processing, interpretation and analysis of the quantities of intelligence information obtained.

A special Panel of the Board, with the Board's Executive Secretary, has made an intensive examination of the organization, management and operation of the National Reconnaissance Program. The Board and its Panel have had consultations with officials of the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency -- the two Government agencies primarily engaged in the Program. Representatives of the Board have conducted on-the-scene examinations of satellite and aircraft reconnaissance installations and activities on the West Coast and elsewhere. Conferences have been held with key officers of private companies holding Government contracts for the

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development and production of elements of the reconnaissance systems employed -- including boosters, orbital engines, aircraft and camera payloads. We have been thoroughly briefed on all significant aspects of the Program.

As a result of its studies the Board has found that the National Reconnaissance Program, despite its achievements, has not yet reached its full potential. Basically, the problem is one of inadequacies in the present organizational structure and support of the national reconnaissance effort. Also, the Program is complicated by the absence of a clear, authoritative delineation and understanding of pertinent roles and missions of the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and of the Director of Central Intelligence in his capacity as principal intelligence officer and coordinator of the total U. S. intelligence effort. In our opinion, action must be directed from the Presidential level in order to correct these difficulties, and to assure that this vital national asset is preserved and strengthened.

Based on our review, the Board submits the following conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions:

1. The National Reconnaissance Program must be conducted as a national effort geared to meet as effectively as possible over-riding national intelligence needs in support of the President, members of the National Security Council, and other officials concerned with matters of national security significance. The national character of this vitally-important intelligence enterprise must be maintained through a joint endeavor on the part of the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the United States Intelligence Board -- with a clearly-established delineation of the roles and responsibilities which each is to perform in support of the Program. It is essential that there be an effective mechanism to accomplish close and continuing collaboration between the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence, and to assure recognition of the intelligence needs and capabilities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and of the Unified and Specified Commands.

2. The Director of Central Intelligence (as Chairman of the United States Intelligence Board responsible for providing coordination and guidance to the United States intelligence effort) has a large and important role in the establishment of intelligence collection requirements and

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priorities to be met through the National Reconnaissance Program, and in ensuring effective exploitation of the intelligence product. Under his leadership the United States Intelligence Board must provide the necessary base for the scheduling and targeting of satellite and aircraft reconnaissance missions over areas which are virtually inaccessible to us through other forms of intelligence coverage. Of equal importance is the function of ensuring that the intelligence "take" from the National Reconnaissance Program is effectively processed, analyzed and fed into the estimating process -- in order that timely consideration may be given to the product at highest Government levels. (We note an analogy in the National Signals Intelligence Program where that complex collection activity is conducted by elements of the Department of Defense, with guidance as to intelligence requirements and exploitation provided by the United States Intelligence Board under the leadership of the Director of Central Intelligence.)

3. Historically, both the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency have made important contributions toward the achievement of an effective, national reconnaissance capability.

The Central Intelligence Agency in the aircraft reconnaissance field has contributed imaginative planning, technical competence, security guidance, and flexibility in the negotiation of "black" contracts for the production of systems components in instances where secrecy is required in the contracting process. The value of the Central Intelligence Agency's contributions of personnel, skills and other resources in this effort is demonstrated by previous successes in the development and operation of the U-2 Program, and more recently in the Oxcart Program which is presently in the flight-test stage. In addition, the Central Intelligence Agency has contributed importantly to the development and production of some of the camera payloads used in the satellite reconnaissance program.

The Department of Defense has demonstrated competence and effectiveness in the management and utilization of the vast military resources which are involved in the development, procurement and operation of both satellite reconnaissance systems and aircraft reconnaissance programs, including extensive support of programs in the latter category which have been managed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

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We are informed that the Air Force provides over 90% of the personnel and resources involved in the satellite reconnaissance program, and that it provides over 50% of the manpower and 90% of the other resources utilized in support of the aircraft reconnaissance program.) Notable examples of achievements by the Department of Defense are the recent photographic intelligence successes in the [REDACTED] satellite project, and the successful procurement by the Air Force of the Central Intelligence Agency's capability for secure handling of "black" covert contracting procedures. In our judgment both of these successes are directly attributable to the centralized management and control practices which are being applied by the Department of Defense under the National Reconnaissance Office structure.

4. It is essential that the National Reconnaissance Program include the fullest use of science and technology in the conduct of long-range, forward-thinking research and development leading to the advancement of our reconnaissance intelligence collection techniques, and to more efficient means for processing and analyzing the intelligence obtained.

The multi-dimensional growth of the National Reconnaissance Program has been accompanied by increasing intelligence demands upon the collection systems involved. Under conditions of heightened emergency these demands would be intensified. Furthermore, should present systems become unavailable to us as the result of the defensive capabilities of governments whose territory we are now overflying, or as the result of restrictions imposed by national policy considerations, the need for advanced reconnaissance capabilities must have been anticipated and provided for within the National Reconnaissance Program.

5. We believe that fuller use should be made of the potential of the Central Intelligence Agency in meeting the vital need for advance planning and research which must be maintained on a high priority basis if our Government is to continue to benefit from uniquely valuable intelligence returns available from overhead reconnaissance operations.

The Central Intelligence Agency, in keeping with its traditional responsibilities in the broad area of research on intelligence methods, should continue to serve as a fertile center of imaginative scientific exploration

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...ing to increased capabilities for information-gathering and intelligence exploitation.

In the reconnaissance intelligence field the Central Intelligence Agency has already acquired invaluable experience, and has assembled a nucleus of scientific and technological talent, all of which can be brought to bear in introducing into the National Reconnaissance Program more effective means for the collection and processing of intelligence data.

New methodologies for using and interpreting film, and for analyzing the total intelligence meaning of it, must be required. This latter need, including the application of modern information theoretic, exploitation of photographic images, and even of new information processing of the intelligence derived from this product, lies in the special domain of the Central Intelligence Agency. This subject, unlike the large operational projects cited above, fits the extensive skills and special interests of the intelligence expert. We believe that a brilliant new capability for the handling of large volumes of photographed knowledge could be stimulated by a major effort of the Central Intelligence Agency. Also evident are obviously wide opportunities for research and development regarding the photographic process itself, and the science and technology associated with it are now timely since there has never really been a planned assault on deep understanding of photography on this scale.

6. Effective development and conduct of the National Reconnaissance Program require that it be a streamlined operation under strong, centralized management and control within the Department of Defense, with ready access to personnel and resources of the Department of Defense and of the Central Intelligence Agency. The cost, complexity and size of the program, particularly the large scale of satellite operations and eyes of experiments such as the forthcoming [REDACTED] make earlier management schemes archaic.

7. We consider that, with modifications which we will propose, a sound organizational concept for the National Reconnaissance Program is set forth in certain parts of the March 13, 1953 Agreement between the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence which (although sometimes honored more in the breach than in its execution) contains these basic provisions:

a. Designation of the Secretary of Defense as Executive Agent for the development, management, and

conduct of the entire National Reconnaissance Program.

b. Authorization to the Secretary of Defense to establish within the Defense Department a National Reconnaissance Office directed by a Defense Department official responsible to the Secretary for carrying out the Program.

c. Authorization to the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office to utilize the personnel and other resources of the Department of Defense and of the Central Intelligence Agency as required for the conduct of the Program.

d. Provision by the Central Intelligence Agency of security guidance for procedures required for protection of sensitive National Reconnaissance Program activities.

e. Assignment to the National Reconnaissance Office of responsibility for complying with the intelligence collection requirements and priorities established by the United States Intelligence Board.

f. Planning and conduct of research and development of future national reconnaissance projects, utilizing appropriate resources and capabilities of the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency and private contractors.

8. Departures from the basic concepts enumerated above, and differing interpretations of the responsibilities involved, are illustrated in part by the following:

a. The opinion of the Director of Central Intelligence that "The problem is to eliminate the conflicts, misunderstandings, personality differences, and organizational ambiguities which continue to plague the program and threaten its future. These result largely from poorly defined interagency responsibilities."

b. The Board's study reveals that the use of monitors by the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence to review the conduct of the National Reconnaissance Program has interfered with the direct chain of command between the Secretary of Defense and the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office, and from the National Reconnaissance Office Director to the Central Intelligence Agency elements engaged in the Program.

c. The authority and responsibility of the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office are further diluted by the operation of an interagency committee which provides

technical direction to some projects of the National Reconnaissance Program on the basis of decisions which must be unanimous and which are unduly time-consuming.

d. There is a lack of firm, unified direction of the entire National Reconnaissance Program with the result that:

- (1) centralized systems engineering and technical direction are lacking in the satellite reconnaissance program,
- (2) one contractor stated that decisions which once took minutes now require months,
- (3) contracting authority is diffused between officers of the Department of Defense and of the Central Intelligence Agency,
- (4) the operations of the National Reconnaissance Program are badly fragmented and confused,
- (5) progress in the research and development of advanced reconnaissance intelligence systems is not sufficiently pursued, and
- (6) the economy of the Program is not the subject of coherent cost reduction or production gain efforts.

Recommendations:

We recommend the issuance of a Presidential directive which will provide guidelines for the centralized direction, management and conduct of the National Reconnaissance Program, and clarification of the departmental and agency responsibilities involved, as follows:

1. Definition of the National Reconnaissance Program as a single program, national in character, for the development, management, control and operation of all projects, both current and long-range, for the collection of intelligence, mapping and geodetic information through overflights (excluding normal peripheral reconnaissance operations).

2. Designation of the Secretary of Defense as Executive Agent for the National Reconnaissance Program, having primary responsibility and authority for (a) the management and conduct of reconnaissance activities involved in the Program and (b) the tasking of personnel, facilities and other resources of

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the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and other agencies as required to carry out that responsibility.

3. Establishment within the Department of Defense of a National Reconnaissance Office to function as a separate operating agency of the Department of Defense, and to be headed by a Director responsible solely to the Secretary of Defense for discharging the Secretary's responsibility as Executive Agent for the National Reconnaissance Program. *

4. Assignment to the Director of Central Intelligence, as Chairman of the United States Intelligence Board, of the function of sharpening and expediting the efforts of the United States Intelligence Board with respect to: (a) the establishment of realistic intelligence collection requirements to guide the national reconnaissance effort in the scheduling and targeting of satellite and aircraft reconnaissance missions; (b) ensuring prompt processing, analysis and reporting to appropriate users of the photographic and signals intelligence obtained from the national reconnaissance effort; and (c) the fullest utilization of such intelligence in the preparation of national intelligence estimates.

5. Direction that there be a coordinated, comprehensive budget for all elements of the National Reconnaissance Program, and that there be established fiscal control and accounting procedures to assure appropriate utilization of funds by the agencies concerned in support of the Program. (We suggest that the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence and the Director of the Budget jointly review

* Pending the outcome of studies now under way in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Board reserves judgment on the advisability of (a) designating the Director of the Joint Reconnaissance Center as Deputy Director of the National Reconnaissance Office, in order that the reconnaissance resources of the military commands may be made readily available to the National Reconnaissance Program, and (b) designating the Commander, Air Force Systems Command, as a Special Assistant in the National Reconnaissance Office to provide immediate coupling of the National Reconnaissance Program with the full resources of the Air Force Systems Command.

...is matter with a view to achieving the best formula for
: accomplishment of these objectives.)

6. Direction to the heads of the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency and other agencies concerned that full utilization be made of the resources of each of those agencies as required for the conduct of research projects looking to the development of new and improved aircraft and satellite reconnaissance vehicles, photographic and other sensors, and advanced methods for improved processing and exploitation of the intelligence obtained therefrom.

7. Assignment to the Central Intelligence Agency of the responsibility for providing the Executive Agent with security policy guidance required for the maintenance of a uniform system of security procedures for the National Reconnaissance Program.

8. In lieu of the monitor and review functions provided for in the present National Reconnaissance Program Agreement, periodic reporting by the Executive Agent for the Program to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, and the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, concerning all aspects of the Program, including organization, management, funding, programming, security, advance planning, research and development, production, and operations.

9. Authorization to the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office to establish a Scientific Advisory Board, to include experts in the fields of science and technology from outside the Government, to provide the Director with technical advice and guidance relating to the achievement of national reconnaissance objectives.

* * *

We recommend further that if the President approves a directive along the lines proposed above, its implementation within the framework of the National Reconnaissance Office include the following actions (along with such others as the Secretary of Defense may authorize as Executive Agent for the Program):

1. Close and continuing collaboration on the part of the Secretary of Defense (as Executive Agent for the National Reconnaissance Program) and the Director of Central Intelligence (in his capacity as principal intelligence officer and

Coordinator of the over-all U. S. intelligence effort) with a view to ensuring (a) the most productive possible utilization of national resources and skills in meeting the critical intelligence objectives involved; (b) opportunities for the Director of Central Intelligence to survey periodically progress made under the Program; and (c) evaluation of the need for proposed reconnaissance systems prior to the undertaking of development and testing.

2. Continued designation of the Under Secretary of the Air Force as Director of the National Reconnaissance Office.

3. Contributions by elements of the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency of personnel required to provide staff support to the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office, in the performance of the mission, functions and operations of the National Reconnaissance Program -- such personnel to serve solely under the direction and supervision of the Director while so assigned.

4. Delegation by the Secretary of Defense (as Executive Agent of the National Reconnaissance Program) to the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office, of the authority for the issuance of directives to elements of the Department of Defense, and for the levying of requests upon the Central Intelligence Agency and other agencies involved, as required for the conduct of the National Reconnaissance Program.

5. Assignment to the Department of Defense (Air Force) of responsibility for the management, over-all systems engineering, procurement and operation of all satellite reconnaissance systems.

6. Elimination of the interagency Configuration Control Board as a decision-making entity within the satellite reconnaissance program.

7. Continued assignment to the Central Intelligence Agency of the OXCART Program. With respect to manned intelligence-collection aircraft of an advanced character, we recommend as a general principle that, following the development stage, the responsibility for their operational use be determined by the Special NSC 5412/2 Group.

8. Continue for the time being present management arrangements with respect to the A-11, the R-12 and the

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BOARD Projects. (We note in this regard that the recent
in facings of the A-11 and the initial deliveries of the
A-12's starting in August 1964 will undoubtedly require
review and possible adjustment in their management structure.)

Respectfully,

FOR THE BOARD

151

CLARK H. CLIFFORD
CHAIRMAN