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WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

October 18, 1971

Dear Noel:

I would like you to join me in sponsoring a plan that could be of high interest to the NRO and the NSA. It concerns the routing of ELINT data from low altitude satellites to tactical users. The idea is this: I feel that the direct distribution concept now in use for POPPY ought to be applied to STRAWMAN and the P-11s. I believe that an arrangement like this would lead to faster reporting and would go a long way toward demonstrating the responsiveness of the NRO/NSA team to the needs of tactical users.

Let me be a little more explicit: As I understand it, POPPY data now goes directly from the field intercept sites to Navy units (6th Fleet: FOSIF, Rota; and NOSIC) and simultaneously to NSA, Fort Meade, for further processing; in the case of STRAWMAN and the P-11s, all intercept data goes from the field site at [redacted] to NSA, Fort Meade, for subsequent distribution to users. I would like to see STRAWMAN and P-11 data routed simultaneously to NSA, Fort Meade, and to Navy units in the same way that POPPY data is now distributed. In the configuration I am describing, we would be employing the NRO and the NSA structure to a greater extent than is the case in the Navy-to-Navy reporting in the POPPY system, because the NSA Support Detachment (NSD) is located at the field site, [redacted] that is, NSA would be doing the reporting for STRAWMAN and the P-11s, making initial reports from a field site instead of from Fort Meade. Follow-up reports, correlated with other data at Fort Meade, would also be furnished, of course.

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Considering that the communications and personnel resources involved in a direct reporting system are relatively inexpensive, and that the interest in tactical ELINT, especially

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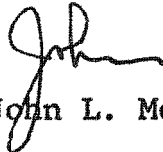
for ocean surveillance, is very high, I feel that we should get on with this direct reporting system, as a joint NRO/NSA project. While some changes in NSA operating procedures would be required, I am sure you are aware that there are equally unusual operational concepts being tried out by the Navy-- including even the stationing of the officer in tactical command at the shore-based FOSIF facility, one of which we would be serving by these means. To reiterate: I would like to see the NRO and the NSA jointly displaying a very great willingness to adapt and improvise; I think we need to give solid evidence along those lines and this simple reporting system would be a most effective first step.

As a pilot run, therefore, I suggest we link to the FOSIF at Rota, Spain, and to the NOSIC in Maryland, in addition to the normal reporting link from to Fort Meade. Existing communications facilities will probably be adequate. In my view, the arrangement should be maintained indefinitely as a working example of national ELINT satellites in a tactical role. In the meantime, our periodic exercises, such as TANGIBLE and ROPEVAL, should continue to give sharper quantitative insights into specific problems.

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I would appreciate your thoughts on the subject.

Sincerely,


John L. McLucas

Vice Admiral Noel Gayler
Director, National Security Agency
Fort Meade, Maryland

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