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8 September 1961

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Acting Director of Central Intelligence

**SUBJECT :** Satellite Reconnaissance Activities in  
Connection with the Berlin Crisis

**REFERENCE :** Memorandum for Special Assistant to the  
President for National Security Affairs,  
prepared for A/DCI signature, same subject.

1. I am passing you herewith the paper drafted by Tidwell for dissemination to McGeorge Bundy.

2. On rereading this since our meeting this morning, I feel I must firmly non-concur in this dissemination. Very briefly my objection to it is that, although this paper is in form a memorandum for information requiring no action or decision by the White House, it is the kind of paper which may well set in motion further inquiries and discussion looking toward a decision there. It seems to me desirable to avoid any such encouragement to the opening up of a new channel of decision-making simply because we have perfectly good channels of decision-making now. Specifically, since CORONA and ARGON are programs jointly managed by the Under Secretary of the Air Force acting in a special capacity and the Agency, the USIB should address a recommendation jointly to the DCI and either the Secretary of Defense or the Under Secretary of the Air Force for action. It seems to me we should encourage the use of normal channels of this sort as long as they work and discourage the unnecessary widening of the form in which these questions are debated.

3. If you feel that a memorandum nevertheless should be sent, I would at least like to have a paragraph added which would state explicitly that USIB recommendations are being forwarded to the Secretary of Defense and the DCI for appropriate consideration and that no action by the White House seems to be required at this time.



RICHARD M. BISSELL, JR.  
Deputy Director  
(Plans)

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DRAFT  
7 September 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Special Assistant to the President  
for National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Satellite Reconnaissance Activities in  
Connection with the Berlin Crisis

1. Since you discussed the problem of acquiring additional satellite reconnaissance photography of the Soviet Union with Mr. Amory, we have successfully recovered another CORONA mission and the resulting photography is now being processed. CORONA missions are also scheduled for <sup>12</sup> September, <sup>19</sup> September, <sup>mid-</sup> October, early November, and late November. Successful recovery of these missions would increase considerably our holdings of photography on the Soviet Union and would probably enable the intelligence community to improve the hardness of its estimate concerning the Soviet ICBM deployment program. However, on the basis of past experience we are not likely to recover all of the scheduled CORONA shots and each failure will reduce our chances for getting this improvement.

2. In addition to the CORONA missions mentioned above, ARGON missions have been scheduled for 28 September and <sup>Late</sup> ~~30~~ October 1961 to acquire improved geodetic control data on the Soviet Union

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to assist targeting for U. S. missiles.

3. We have examined ways in which we might increase the number of CORONA missions during the next month or two in order to maximize the chances for covering Soviet operational ICBM sites during the current period of international tension. We have concluded that, if additional launch facilities were allocated to the CORONA program, it would take so long to modify the pads that the additional launch facilities would be of no help during the critical period. Currently allocated launch facilities are used for both CORONA and ARGON missions and are fully scheduled. The only feasible way, therefore, of increasing CORONA coverage during the near term would be to substitute CORONA missions for the two already scheduled ARGON missions. The decision to use the CORONA or the ARGON payload on a particular shot must be made about three weeks in advance of the scheduled shot. As a result of our overriding need for additional reconnaissance photography at this time, the U. S. Intelligence Board <sup>recommended</sup> decided on 7 September <sup>the</sup> to substitute <sup>of</sup> a CORONA mission for the ARGON mission scheduled on 28 September. If most of the CORONA missions are recovered and if we feel we have substantially improved the hardness of our estimate on ICBM deployment, this ARGON shot may be reinserted in the schedule at a later date. If, however, after several more CORONA missions

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we feel that we have not yet improved the hardness of the estimate, it may be necessary to substitute a CORONA mission for the other currently scheduled ARGON mission as well. This would give us a maximum potential of seven CORONA missions between now and December 1961 when weather and winter darkness in the target area will require a temporary suspension of operations. Whether or not we will achieve a substantial improvement in the hardness of our estimate with this number of missions will depend on the degree of success encountered in the functioning of the CORONA system and the amount of weather degradation encountered by those missions successfully recovered.

C. P. CABELL  
General, USAF  
Acting Director

