ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

12 Feb 59

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Policy Relating to the Official Identification of Projects DISCOVERER, SENTRY, and MIDAS.

Reference is made to the series of briefings, conferences, and other discussions relating to the reorientation of the subject projects as a result of which it has been agreed that the several elements of WS-117L should be separately identified and development continued on the basis of individual missions as distinguished from blanket priority assigned to WS-117L.

There is continuing evidence that the nature of these arrangements is not fully understood throughout the departments concerned. This has resulted in some confusion and a tendency, both in public and classified correspondence, to associate the several projects with each other.

It is considered that a separate identification of the projects is essential to our space effort [redacted] be disseminated within appropriate channels throughout the several departments and agencies having an interest therein.

It would be appreciated if the contents of this memorandum could be disseminated in order that the projects identified as DISCOVERER and MIDAS may stand alone and without further reference to SENTRY, or WS-117L.

Program definitions are as follows:

DISCOVERER

Project DISCOVERER is an open-ended series of satellite launchings utilizing initially the Thor IRBM as a basic booster, intended to carry out certain vehicle tests, bio-medical flights, and recovery experiments. Initial flights involve the development of engineering techniques, components, and systems. Upper stages will be used along with the boosters for these flights. The orbital life will vary from short periods to long periods, the orbits will vary in altitude, and the initial satellite in orbit will weigh approximately 1,300 pounds. The DISCOVERER series will be launched initially from the Pacific Missile Range, California, into near polar orbits. A number of these

[redacted]

satellites are intended to be directed out of orbit for recovery on the earth. Initial recovery operations will be conducted in air or at sea north of the Hawaiian Islands. Tracking and/or data acquisition stations will be located in California, Alaska, Hawaii, and on shipboard south of the Pacific Missile Range.

SENTRY

Project SENTRY involves a series of satellite launchings, utilizing initially the Atlas ICBM with an upper stage that will employ both film recovery and film readout techniques for the purpose of conducting visual and [redacted] reconnaissance. The SENTRY satellites will be launched initially from the Pacific Missile Range, California, into near polar orbits. This series of firings is mission-oriented, even during its R&D phase, with boosters and upper stages designed to provide orbits at various altitudes, orbital life, and trajectories, depending upon the specific intelligence objective to be met. Both recovery readout and electronic techniques are under development in this program.

MIDAS

Project MIDAS involves the priority development of a [redacted] based, infra-red sensing system designed to provide maximum warning of missile launchings or other strategic attacks against the United States.

Roy W. Johnson
Director

Copies furnished:
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