

E

~~TOP SECRET~~



4 March 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Plans)

THROUGH : Chief, Administrative Branch NPD-DE/P

SUBJECT : Establishment of a Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Activities and the Possible Effect upon Project COBRA.

1. The Washington Post carried a story today (copy attached) stating that Senator Stuart Symington had been named to head a new Senate subcommittee to investigate "wasteful rivalry and duplication" in space programs.
2. The fact that Senator Symington has been a strong critic of the Administration defense policies leads me to suspect that his inquiries might well include the present DISCOVERER series. As you know, the press reaction to the recent DISCOVERER launching highlighted the benefits to the "Man in Space Program" and alluded to future technical advancements in weapons system development. Also, our intention to cloak future activities in an air of limited secrecy with only certain facts being given to the press and general public could make us a target of Mr. Symington's committee. In the past, he has made several comments which reflect his displeasure over the Administration tendency to hide behind security.
3. As you may have gathered by now, I am leading up to the suggestion that Mr. Symington be briefed on COBRA and our difficulties in dealing with the press to conceal the mission involved. In suggesting such action, however, I have several reasons in mind, all of which would, I feel, have benefit to our present 1959 program and any 1960 activities we may be charged with.
4. You will recall the problems we inherited when we assumed the responsibility of the SIFTIX program. Many of the clues given the press that a reconnaissance capability was in being came from Congressional hearings where high government officials were questioned on the reconnaissance effort. A briefing of Senator Symington would alert him to the present program and offer us an opportunity to seek his assistance in furthering the COBRA cover. His previous position

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

as Secretary of the Air Force under the Truman Administration, I am sure left him with an appreciation of the problems we are faced with. To bring him into our confidence is a risk not without strong political overtones, but one I feel we must take or else suffer the results of probing questions asked of Agency heads who will be required to honestly respond.

5. Perhaps my approach to this situation is naive, however, I visualize a possible situation that would enable us to have certain questions asked of Agency heads such as Mr. Roy Johnson or Mr. Herbert York which would permit them to respond along the lines of our cover story. Such questions and answers would of course have to be cleared between Senator Springston and the particular Agency head scheduled to appear before the subcommittee. Such congressional hearings will obviously be of interest to the press and any statements made at such hearings will be taken as facts which the press will quote. We will have thus established a firm foundation to our present cover story and any future cover for reconnaissance activities. Such comments would remove any suspicion presently held by certain technical reporters.

6. It is totally possible that the subcommittee will not interest itself in specific programs but rather seek only line of command information in an effort to establish a more realistic division of responsibility within the missile community. Whatever the purpose of their inquiries, I believe we are faced with the serious problem of being inadvertently exposed. My main concern is the possibility that during the course of questioning any Agency or Department heads affiliated with the CCEMA program, questions are apt to be asked which require answers that would destroy all of our cover efforts leaving us with nothing to "hang a 1960 hat on." A second exposure of the WS-117L program would mean disaster, for there are only certain activities that can be conducted with satellites. Of considerable concern, for example, is any questioning of Mr. Roy Johnson (ARPA) who has been in strong opposition to the use of the Thor Boost for photographic reconnaissance purposes. He is reportedly leaving government service and may feel free to air his views on this matter before a congressional subcommittee, if questioned on the technical qualities of one system as opposed to another.

7. An approach to Mr. Springston may not be the answer. Perhaps we should seek council with Senator Lyndon Johnson in an effort to determine whether specific programs are going to be examined or can be avoided. I am not familiar with the means available to the Agency

Page 2 of 3

~~TOP SECRET~~

Copy

~~TOP SECRET~~

for approaching such individuals, however, I do know that General Schriever is a very close personal friend of Senator Johnson and this relationship may be the means of inquiring into the scope of the subcommittee's concern.

6. I realize the difficulties and possible misunderstanding of any attempt to exercise control over the substance of subcommittee hearings. However, I believe my suggestions to be in the national interest and I make them for the sole purpose of protecting a capability that has great potential to the safety of the nation. I suggest your early consideration of an approach to this problem.

SIGNED

[REDACTED]
COVER LETTER
MFD-12/7

Attachment: (1) Newspaper Clipping

Distribution:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page 3 of 3

Copy [REDACTED]

Symington To Investigate Space 'Waste'

By John A. Goldsmith
United Press International

Sen. Stuart Symington, a strong critic of Administration defense policies, was named yesterday to head a new Senate subcommittee to investigate "wasteful rivalry and duplication" in space programs.

Chairman Lyndon B. Johnson of the Senate Space Committee announced establishment of the new subcommittee and the selection of the Missouri Democrat to head it. Symington is a possible 1960 Democratic presidential contender.

Johnson, the Senate Democratic leader, said the new seven-man subcommittee will start hearings as soon as possible and report, with recommendations, at an early date.

Noting that "at least" 14 agencies or commissions have some authority or responsibility in the space effort, Johnson said rivalry is "inevitable" and sometimes can become a valuable spur to achievement.

But he said "wasteful rivalry and duplication must be guarded against."

He said the Symington group will provide "continued surveillance" over organizational aspects of the space program with an aim of developing "facts for the people," uncovering "costly duplications that can be avoided," and "to provide the basis for sound legislation."

In addition to Symington, members of the new subcommittee are Sens. Thomas J. Dodd (D-Conn.), Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev.), Stephen M. Young (D-Ohio), Styles Bridges (R-N. H.), Margaret Chase Smith (R-Maine) and Clifford P. Case (R-N. J.).

ATTACHMENT TO: [REDACTED]

CONFIDENTIAL