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18 August 1960

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MEMORANDUM FOR: COMOR

FROM: Col. James E. Mahon, JCS
SUBJECT: Urgent Requirements for CORONA and ARGON

1. The successful recovery of Discoverer XIII necessitates a relook at scheduling of future launchings. It is understood that Discoverer XIV will incorporate components which have demonstrated success, i. e., the C camera as carried on Discoverer XI and the recovery system of Discoverer XIII and a continuance of the Agena A engine. Through this combination it is hoped that a systems capability can be demonstrated in total.
2. Accomplishment of the basic milestones of operating a camera in space and recovering a payload from orbit focuses attention on refinement and improvement of this collection system. These operations must also be considered in context with intelligence requirements. The requirements upon which Discoverer was based have become increasingly critical with the loss of time during the development phase, particularly when coupled with the loss of the U-2 capability during this interim. Wherever possible, efforts should now be expended to gain gross coverage of the USSR, on a selective priority basis, as expeditiously as possible. The C' camera and the second generation recovery device have been designed for improved performance and reliability. The Agena B engine has been developed to provide multiple day operations, allowing for programming reconnaissance coverage for all of the USSR as well as a greater altitude capability required by the geodetic satellite. The national requirements for reconnaissance and geodesy are both critical and it is difficult to assign relative priorities, i. e., reconnaissance

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is urgently needed to assess the threat of the USSR; and the geodetic locations must be acquired to ensure effectiveness of weapons systems, in being, or soon to be deployed, as well as to maintain an effective deterrent posture. An additional complicating factor is the limited May to October operational season for the geodetic satellite.

3. It is proposed that the COMOR recommend to the CORONA and ARGON operators that, if it is technically feasible, at the earliest possible date a CORONA shot with the C prime camera and Agena B engine be utilized to obtain reconnaissance of the whole of Russia with special reference to target areas as set forth in  25 May 1960, "List of Highest Priority Targets," to be followed as soon as possible by the ARGON camera with Agena B engine to fulfill geodesy requirements. While it is recognized that the implementation of this recommendation would alter the schedule established for these programs the COMOR view is that the urgency of both national strategic targets (the objective of CORONA) and the geodesy requirements (ARGON) are of such urgency as to warrant the change in schedule if compatible with sound technical communications.



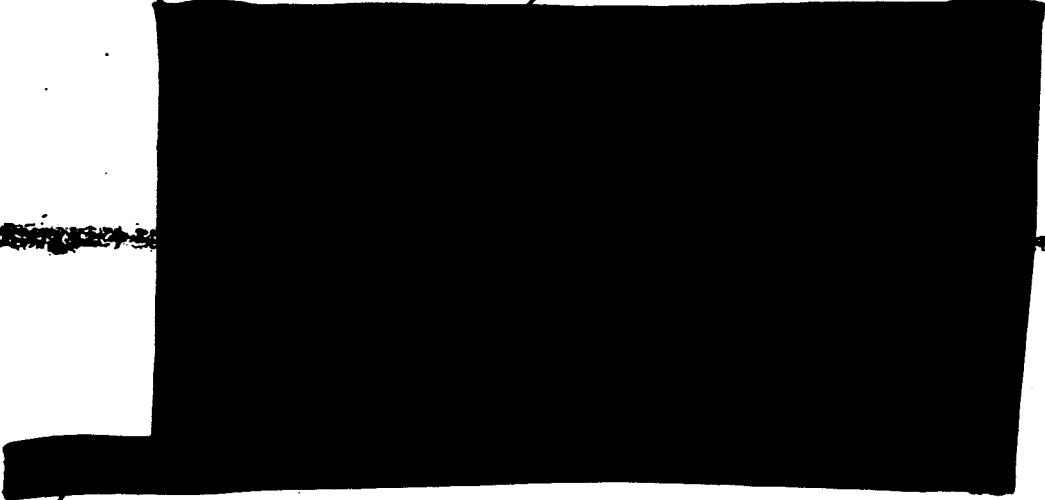
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