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This document contains information referring

ARGON

Declassified and Released by the NWC

In Accordance with E. O. 12958
NOV 26 1997

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ARGON

Project ARGON, now a CIA project with Army and Air Force participation.

proposes to fill the gaps in the world-wide geodetic system by means of a satellite containing a camera system which will simultaneously photograph the earth and stars, while accurately recording time on each photograph.

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The original proposal known as SALAAM was presented to the Air Force, Navy, Joint Chiefs of Staff (WSEG), and various other Army agencies during the summer of 1958, and to ARPA for funding and approval on 4 December 1958. All contacted agencies heartily indorsed the SALAAM proposal except the Air Force. The Air Force attacked the SALAAM proposal at ARPA by questioning the need for SALAAM to obtain this world-wide geodetic information, stating they felt it was being provided by other means, i.e., the SAMOS (SENTRY 117L) program and another project of a highly classified nature.

When ARPA, with Army assistance, refuted the Air Force claims and indicated a request would be made for \$20 million from the Department of Defense emergency fund, the Air Force submitted a counter-proposal which should be carried out in the SENTRY program under Air Force control. This proposal was not an integrated program and in many respects was beyond the known "state of the art" until certain indefensible portions were summarily dropped and portions of SALAAM substituted. The Air Force also attempted to exercise further influence at a high level in Department of Defense to persuade the Director of ARPA to withdraw ARPA's request for funds.

A second Air Force plan for a Recoverable Reconnaissance Satellite System which they alleged would meet mapping and geodetic requirements was presented to ARPA on 15 January 1959 (Project [redacted]). ARPA prepared a comparative analysis of the Air Force and Army proposals and used this in an evaluation report which [redacted].

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- a. That either the Air Force or the Army could be assigned over-all management of the program as ARPA's agent.
- b. That the vehicle, launch, tracking, and recovery operation be assigned to the Air Force (BMD-Lockheed).
- c. That the payload, ground base data equipment, processing and analysis be assigned to the Army [REDACTED].

At this time the Air Force told Dr. York there was no urgent need for this project, and thus managed to delay it until another (third) complete evaluation could be made by Dr. Billings - Dr. York's Project Officer. The Billings Report reconfirmed the Army's claim of urgency by showing that to have an ability to kill hard targets (25 to 100 psi) in the politically inaccessible areas by 1962, we must improve our geodetic holdings now. Dr. York approved the program and agreed to provide [REDACTED]. The Air Force had in their budget [REDACTED] for a satellite camera. The Air Force indicated to the Department of Defense they intended to award a contract for a 6" focal length satellite mapping camera. ARPA requested that the Air Force hold this award in abeyance until after DOD had reached a decision regarding the geodetic satellite program. Air Force disregarded ARPA's request and awarded the contract to the Fairchild Instrument and Camera Corporation for a 6" mapping satellite camera. Subsequent to this the Air Force was ordered by DOD [REDACTED] to cancel their contract. Instead of complying with these orders, they issued orders for a temporary holdup. When the geodetic satellite (ARGON) was approved, ARPA converted this Air Force camera contract from a 6" to a 3" focal length camera and made it a part of the ARGON program.

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At this point the CIA became aware of the project. They convinced DOD that due to national security [REDACTED] would have control the program including contracting, financing, logistics, security, and technical supervision. ARPA agreed except for technical supervision, stating that the Army through ARPA must exercise technical supervision in view of the Army's established technical competence in this area. Final agreement was reached on 24 August 1959 whereby both agencies (CIA and ARPA) would exercise joint technical supervision.

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