

[REDACTED] CORONA [REDACTED]

SA/S/O
4/29/69

25 April 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: Committee on Imagery Requirements and Exploitation

SUBJECT: Flexibility -- Quick Response Capability for CORONA

1. The attached memorandum from NRO, dated 21 April 69, pertains to last week's discussion of the ability of photo satellites to meet such situations as the need for accelerated coverage of selected ICBM complexes. [REDACTED] approach to the flexibility problem consists of comments on the QRC of CORONA, which is certainly the system requiring most attention at this time.

2. It is the intention of the Chairman again to discuss the flexibility problem at the COMIREX meeting on 1 May 1969. This subject will be scheduled on the agenda under Section IV, Action Items, but we feel serious consideration should be given to a report to the Board on the whole question of flexibility or QRC, in the context of the realities of the present situation and requirements downstream.

[REDACTED]

Executive Secretary

Committee on Imagery Requirements and Exploitation

Attachment
Subject Paper

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21 April 1969

NRO

[REDACTED]

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN, COMIREX

SUBJECT: Quick Response Capability for CORONA

1. I understand from [REDACTED] that the COMIREX has expressed concern regarding the present response capability of CORONA. Particular reference was made to a 1963 memorandum by the Secretary of Defense relating to readiness status. This memorandum actually now has been overtaken by events since ExCom decisions made in the interim have impacted on the launch capability of the Program. The present status of CORONA is that the NRO maintains a capability to launch CORONA within 15 days. The 15 days is a minimum time set by the utilization of a single pad. When the NRO reduced CORONA operations to a single pad and established the R-15 capability, it is my understanding that you were informed of the decision.

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2. When a deficiency in a CORONA system is identified which has caused a failure or could cause a failure, it is necessary to rectify the difficulty or else accept a launch with known deficiencies and a possibility of failure. In the most recent circumstance, a failure on-orbit was traced to defective attitude thrusters which required replacement. These corrective actions required a certain period of time which set the earliest date at which a CORONA could be launched with confidence in its success. These factors were explained to COMIREX. Barring such technical difficulties we are able to maintain an R-15 status. However, no shortening of that time is practical with single pad operation.

[REDACTED]

CORONA

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] CORONA [REDACTED]

3. There are certain other limitations. The remaining inventory of CORONA vehicles gives us a minimum prudent overlap [REDACTED] is delayed, or if early flights have difficulties, there are very few CORONA vehicles to provide contingency coverage. The reorder time for CORONA vehicles has been established at 24 to 26 months which is barely sufficient if a reorder decision were made by June of this year. The D/NRO has directed us to give careful attention to this problem and to consider the necessity of a reorder before June. If engineering difficulties arise in a vehicle, in view of the limited inventory, we are particularly concerned that a prudent course of action be selected which maximizes the probability of obtaining the required collection. It would be imprudent, in other than the gravest emergency, to launch a CORONA with known deficiencies which could lead to catastrophic failure. Furthermore, virtually any adjustments to the schedule will make it necessary to consider the impact in the future when there may occur a period where the remaining inventory will not permit full satisfaction of semi-annual search requirements.

4. In summary, the present program allows very little in the way of quick response actions without significant consequences to later collection capability. It is wise to point out that this situation will also be true during the early phases of the [REDACTED] until we are able to establish confidence in vehicle reliability and establish a reserve vehicle in a readiness status.

We shall hear more about this aspect of the matter.

5. At any rate, I hope my comments will clarify the situation. If they do not please call upon me.

/S/

[REDACTED]
 Brigadier General, USAF
 Director - ?

[REDACTED] CORONA