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1 November 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Chief, DFD-ED/P

SUBJECT : Proposal of State Department to Reveal to Soviet Officials of Intelligence Information, Including an Example of Product of CORONA

1. At the direction of the Acting Chief, DFD, I have considered the potential damage which might result from the disclosure to the Soviets of intelligence information concerning Soviet satellite missile bases, including an actual example of the primary source of our information.

2. Presumably, to be effective, the example would be the product of CORONA. It is assumed that the Soviets would thereby receive solid confirmation of the high degree of success of our satellite intelligence photography. As a consequence:

a. A directive signed by President Eisenhower, reaffirmed by the present Administration, took cognizance of the need for extreme security measures to protect such information and authorized its protection by a special security system. This proposed disclosure and the exhibit of the product to the Soviets, I suggest, would contravene this Presidential edict;

b. CIA, having the primary security responsibility for the operation of the CORONA program, has made every effort to conceal the fact that we have been installing photographic equipment in operational satellites; that film has been successfully recovered from the space vehicles and the very interrelationship of the suppliers, including those who manufacture photographic equipment for these programs and process the product;

c. Since the DISCOVERER series has been the only consistently successful vehicle in this area, it can readily be concluded that in all probability such series of satellite launchings is the source of this intelligence information.

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Consequently, we would be providing an ideal target for a rigorous Soviet protest with probable detrimental effects upon this collection effort vital to the national interest;

d. In this regard it should be noted that the Air Force has belatedly recognized the fact that undue publicity to "Spy in the Sky" programs can have adverse effects upon the continuation of such intelligence gathering means and has recently placed severe restraints upon such publicity.

3. It is concluded, therefore, that grievous damage to our collection efforts could well result from the proposed disclosure. In the interest of continuing our successful efforts in this vital area, it is recommended that the proposed disclosures not be made.

[REDACTED]
Chief, Security Branch
DPD-DD/P

DPD/SO: [REDACTED]
Distribution: [REDACTED]
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