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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF DEFENSE RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING  
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

7 December 1964

BYE-5430/64

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ALVIN STEEDMAN, ISA

SUBJECT: ISA Project No. 3, dated 17 Nov 64 (BYE-23541-64)

In reading over the copy of ISA Project No. 3, I find that the conclusions and recommendations are very much those which I would have wished to see.

I believe that the U.S. reconnaissance satellite capability is an asset which should not be compromised by any unnecessary actions, including those raising questions which merely seek to discuss its legitimization. We therefore, can only agree that we should not ourselves raise those questions in any open or international forum, and that all possible moves should be taken to make crystal clear that we do not consider it a subject amenable to discussion or review, so that we do not unilaterally raise questions or open discussions which attempt to somehow legitimize this capability, or make it a capability bolstered by some international legal agreement which we would try to create.

*Alvin Steedman*

This attitude that the satellite capability is one of our instruments to gain national policy and is therefore not a subject for external review should, in my view, be followed as a practical example of the political facts of life.

On the other hand, there are some considerations which may be of mutual interest in the arms control area, as is emphasized in the report. I have had several discussions with ACOMA people on this in the past, especially when they wished me to support the release of the RAND document by Mort Lavin. My argument has always been that the arms control aspect cannot, and should not, be coupled at this stage to an

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...will remain an legislative policy but rather should be carried out by a series of less independent study exercises. Consequently, I agree with the RAND people that the RAND document should not be released because it would serve no clear purpose but would, in effect, pre-empt decisions on many unresolved issues which still confront us, and will continue to confront us, as a result of the NSC actions several years ago.

I believe, however, that we should have some contingency plans available to seize any opportunity in the arms control context which arises (but not necessarily as a result of our own initiative). In particular, I have discussed with a number of people the fact that arms control interests in reconnaissance satellites can be uncoupled from the DoD program by the simple prudent expedient of not using as a model for any concrete discussion, if we would reach that stage, actual DoD capabilities or a hypothetical capability clearly based on a very broad background of current and future capabilities (the latter class includes the RAND option). I would instead like to see a realistic study based on a reconnaissance capability which is in the stages of rapid development currently, which already is essentially an open program, and which, in one way or another, will have a substantial amount of international participation. This is the entire technology which will be used in the NASA Lunar Orbiter program, which, while it in turn is based on earlier DoD capabilities does, only makes use of capabilities which have been superseded for a number of reasons. There is no actual plan at this stage for flying the Lunar system in earth orbit for earth observation in order to develop and check the system engineering. However, the technology is being discussed openly and will, as time goes on, become essentially public property in virtually all relevant details.

Now, if one had a reconnaissance satellite arms control investigation on such a system, it would have several advantages: (a) it need not bring explicitly into the discussion DoD capabilities; (b) we have already, in effect, begun to make public property of this technology; and (c) the system, as it is now being developed for the lunar orbit case, would already have a relevant arms control capability, if used in earth orbit. In particular, its high resolution camera at an altitude of several hundred miles would be only modestly inferior to the CORONA camera, and its imaging camera could provide, given enough time, reasonably useful mapping products not very far different from those currently in our classified program.

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... satellite vehicle as a model for control discussion purposes ... it is clearly not hypothetical ... would be a rich list of examples by which to judge actual ... responses and interests in an "international" ... version of such a system. It also has the advantage ... in the earth orbit case it would, in fact, produce some useful ... photography of ... capability also and fairly decent mapping at considerably ... resolution, if we wished to discuss a "utilitarian" international ... nations as an example. The system would, of course, be limited by the fact that it is designed ... capability would perhaps be a ... tool for internationalization since, in effect, many countries ... directly from the satellite and so share a greater ... of participation.

I emphasize that my view on this is that a rather thorough and detailed ... should be drawn up on how one would use the NASA Lunar Orbiter ... of relevance for arms control and/or mapping, ... as a contingency in order to seize ... at a time when it is appropriate to do so with- ... committing ourselves to a consciously planned unilateral ... as it affects DoD interests.

I think that doing such a mechanism would have the advantage of providing ... without coupling it to DoD capa- ... which we should insist on prequalifying as our national interests ... reviewing the problem in any way in an international ... arguments on opening ... to AUSA and their assisting groups. I agree ... would be served by raising questions ... DoD reconnaissance satellites and that we should not ... of trading this capability for more ... potential rewards or interests such as inter- ... control observation purposes, in the present ... building a contingency plan around the

