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16 July 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, COMIREX

VIA : Maj. General Reynolds *gml*

MC&G study has approved by DES and implementation actions are being prepared.

SUBJECT : COMIREX Participation in the Field of MC&G

1. I am responding to your memorandum of 15 July via General Reynolds so that he may append his comment. While I do not want to upset the present working arrangements on the handling of photographic collection for MC&G until a decision is made on General Reynolds' study, I find one factor that bothers me and is not made clear in your memorandum. I refer to the establishment of requirements. As you know, it is my view that MC&G should not be considered as an intelligence program. Therefore, I do not think that USIB should establish the requirements for collection of information for MC&G.

2. The description of what your Committee does with regard to the assignment of priorities for photographic collection of MC&G data seems quite reasonable to me. As I view it, what you're doing is making a determination of how much coverage we can allocate to MC&G without undue interference to intelligence collection. This seems to me to be an appropriate function for your Committee. However, as soon as it can be done without upsetting the program, I think that USIB, and hence your Committee, should get out of the business of establishing requirements for photo coverage for MC&G purposes.

Rufus Taylor
Rufus Taylor
Vice Admiral, U. S. Navy
Deputy Director

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Conclusions

19. In the course of its review and assessment

COMIREX reached the following conclusions:

- a. During the next six to 12 months, prospects for the basic photographic satellite reconnaissance program are, to an abnormal degree, dependent upon the unique, essentially one-time, circumstances and risks incident to introduction of major new systems into the National Reconnaissance Program inventory. In this period these same factors will also restrict even further the inherently limited capabilities of the present photo-satellite systems for flexibility and responsiveness to urgent crisis needs. Aircraft and drones will be the only available supplementary platforms.
- b. With regard to the basic program the NRO should be advised that the USIB endorses adoption of conservative operational approaches for early HEXAGON launches, if necessary at the expense of initial exercise of

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the system's more advanced capabilities, in order to assure vital continuity of search coverage for the basic program.

c. As insurance for also maintaining continuity of satellite photo coverage in the future, in the event of a major system failure, the NRO should develop the capability to launch a back-up vehicle from that system or to move up the launch date of an alternate system within 30 to 45 days if needed.

d. After initial success with HEXAGON, any remaining CORONA vehicles should be held as contingency reserves and the capability maintained to launch them on a 30-day standby basis.

e. The NRO should continue its planned acquisition of the operational capability to adapt a GAMBIT vehicle for very-high-altitude missions (Higherboy program).

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f. Under the basic GAMBIT/HEXAGON launch schedule as presently projected, significant gaps between periods of satellite coverage will continue to exist in the FY 1973-75 period. In terms of cost-effectiveness, this deficiency in total annual days-on-orbit can best be offset by increases in mission-life, rather than by additional launches. Present programs to increase the GAMBIT mission duration to 27 days and that of HEXAGON eventually to 45 days should be supported.

g. The present review again confirms the long-standing Community judgment as to the essential capabilities necessary for an imagery satellite system effectively responsive to warning and crisis intelligence needs. The USIB requirements for a near-real-time imagery satellite system continue to represent the primary goal against which the major effort in this field should be directed.

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h. The proposals available to the NRO for limited, interim specialized photographic satellite systems and techniques variously designed to meet some aspects of the need for crisis quick-response capability, which were reviewed for COMIREX in the present study, do not appear to afford sufficient capabilities to warrant a redirection of resources from present NRO programs.

i. Recognizing, however, the continuing deficiencies in timeliness of response which will exist until the major near-real-time system is available, and that throughout the intervening period supplementing airborne systems will be the only means of performing additional photographic reconnaissance if special needs arise, it is desirable to continue to examine the possibilities of these interim satellite systems in the context of the relative trade-offs between their benefits and costs.

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Recommendations

20. COMIREX recommends that the USIB:

- a. Note the attached COMIREX study and approve its dissemination as background for guidance to the NRO.
- b. Approve conclusions ___ to ___ in paragraph 19, above, and forward them as supplemental guidance to the NRO.
- c. Approve paragraphs ___ to ___ of the attached COMIREX study as updated guidance related to potential needs for SALT, supplementing that provided in reference a.
- d. Reaffirm that the USIB requirements for a near-real-time imagery satellite system continue to represent the objective against which the major effort in the area of warning intelligence and crisis response should be directed.
- e. If the Board finds a potential requirement for an interim, limited, fast-response satellite capability to augment collection during the FY 73 to FY 75 period, instruct COMIREX and the NRO to study and evaluate jointly the capabilities, relative benefits, and costs of acquiring such systems.

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