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WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

22 May 1969

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MEMORANDUM FOR DR. McLUCAS

SUBJECT: Provision for Adequate Overlap Between the CORONA and HEXAGON Systems

PROBLEM

Should additional CORONA systems be procured at this time in order to provide adequate overlap with the HEXAGON program?

DISCUSSION

The present 12 CORONA assets, if launched at a rate of 6 in FY 1970 and 6 in FY 1971, would last thru June 1971, with a follow-on CORONA required by August 1971, about 26 months from now. The CIA has indicated (TAB "A") that 18 to 20 months are required to procure additional CORONA payloads. General King feels that the camera system will be the pacing item, and that 16 to 18 months is achievable on other components (this may require temporary diversion of Agenas from other programs; considered to be feasible). This indicates that a procurement decision can be delayed by up to 6 months from now under these conditions. An option is to reduce the number of CORONA launches in FY 1970 and 1971, thereby extending the availability of the 12 assets into FY 1972, and allowing a later decision time and further examination of HEXAGON status and other alternatives. A consideration that needs to be examined, for instance, is the reliability of the present CORONA system in relation to additional procurements, and whether there could be more attractive GAMBIT options for an interim period.

There may be a necessity to consider problems in relation to individual components in the meantime. For example, if inertial guidance for GAMBIT is approved, critical tubes needed for the CORONA radio guidance system might stop. In such event, it might be appropriate to buy a stockpile of the tubes. These can be addressed individually as problems materialize.

You have indicated that it might be appropriate to establish a ceiling on HEXAGON obligations in FY 1970 at the President's Budget amount of \$182.3 million. While the Program Directors submitted estimates of \$246.2M against

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the Ex Com approved program, [] and the NRO Staff will recommend initial approvals at \$175.9M in the forthcoming financial program reviews. The NRO Comptroller forecasts that about \$44M of the deferrals would materialize, for a total FY 1970 program of \$219.9M. However, there are a number of other considerations involved before an FY 1970 ceiling could be established, such as (1) the FY 1971 budget would also have to be addressed, inasmuch as the Program Directors have submitted estimates at \$59.3 million above the December 1968 FYDP amount, (2) a lower cost Option 3 at 3 HEXAGON launches per year, (3) an equitable distribution of the \$182.3M between SAFSP and CIA which would result in a balanced schedule slip (also with FY 1971 implications), and (4) with a determined HEXAGON schedule slip, the FY 1970/1971 costs of buying "unbudgeted" CORONAs. Comptroller summaries of FY 1970 and 1971 HEXAGON indications are at TAB B.

From the standpoint of technical confidence in the HEXAGON, the chamber tests on the engineering model are expected to start on 1 June 1969 and be complete by mid-August. At that time, a critical review of the HEXAGON program should be made. If there is an indication that major problems exist, an FY 1970 fiscal ceiling (and perhaps FY 1971) could be imposed, with some redistribution between SAFSP and CIA initial approvals.

CONCLUSION

It is not necessary, nor desirable, to order additional CORONA systems now. There are a number of options, HEXAGON status evaluations, and other considerations involved before further actions should be taken, as illustrated by the preceding discussion.

RECOMMENDATION

That a review board, to be chaired by the SPD General King, be convened about 1 September to review the HEXAGON program critically, and make recommendations to the DNRO accordingly.

William E. Williamson
WILLIAM E. WILLIAMSON
Lt Colonel, U.S.A.

[]
Comptroller

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