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~~151~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

12 October 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. McLUCAS

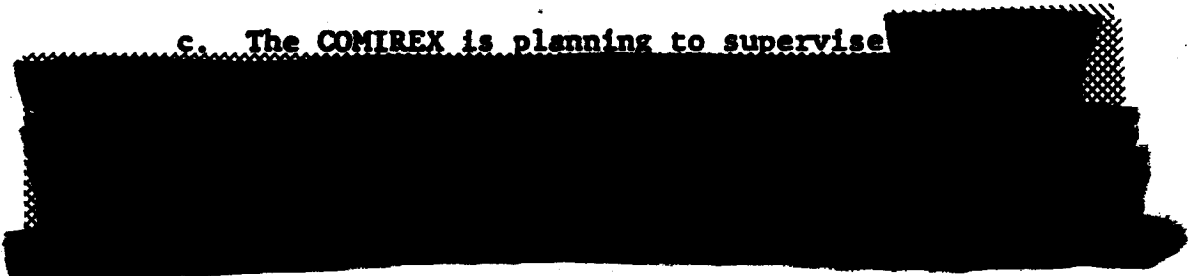
SUBJECT: Some Thoughts on the Organization and Functions  
of the NRO Staff

The NRO is under a lot of pressure. Here are some  
examples:

a. OSD staff agencies (ASD(I), DDR&E) are achieving  
some degree of supervisory authority over the engineering  
management of the NRO. By engineering management I mean  
advanced planning, scheduling, and budgeting.

b. NSA is making inroads in the operational area.  
NSA would like to control the satellites in orbit but would  
agree for the time being to a relationship, as provided in  
NSCID 6, whereby NSA operates the satellite payload and the  
NRO is in charge of satellite housekeeping and vehicle health.

c. The COMIREX is planning to supervise



I view the pressures from the DOD staff as very serious;  
I believe the NSA and COMIREX pressures are very much less  
serious. Here is why:

a. The management decision process of the NRO in  
matters of vehicle types, budgets, and schedules (all of which  
I call engineering management) is absolutely vital. It should

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be preserved against the normalizing and averaging down of staff processes either at the OSD level or at the Army, Air Force, or Navy level. The technical excellence of the NRO collection systems cannot possibly be preserved if engineering management of the program falls under routine DOD control.

b. With respect to operational aspects, the case for perpetuating NRO control seems far more negotiable. For instance:

(1) NSA really has a good capability for Washington-level supervision of field collection activities. The NRO SOC could become good in this area, but then it would parallel and duplicate the function that NSA wants and is competent to do.

(2) The COMIREX, by charter, validates and sets priorities for collection requirements from all intelligence users. Many users believe that COMIREX is too slow and cannot handle real time requirements.



In response to the pressures upon the NRO, therefore, I believe the NRO Staff should (1) concentrate on doing the best possible job of engineering management and (2) play down the question of operational control. This ordering of priorities within the NRO Staff would strengthen the NRO organization over-all in two ways:

First, by concentrating on engineering management, the NRO Staff would actually be more useful in its liaisons with intelligence-oriented agencies (CIA, NSA, DIA, and others); the Staff would be providing a needed and expert voice in engineering and schedule matters rather than contesting for authority over the intelligence mission as such.

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Second, the NRO would gain considerable support from NSA and elements of the CIA by eliminating NRO competition in areas which they want, are better at, or are chartered to work in.

If this line of reasoning makes sense, then it might be a good idea to reorganize the NRO Staff. The engineering (Programs) office and the SOC could be combined into a new Program-oriented engineering management office in which several teams of one or two engineers each would be responsible for all aspects of each collection program (lik [redacted] from advanced planning through on-orbit operations.

I am still trying out these ideas on members of the Staff and people outside the NRO. Also, I am looking at the personnel implications. In the meantime I am keeping the options open for making this sort of change with no definite timetable in mind so far.

[redacted]

David D. Bradburn  
Brigadier General, USAF

16 Oct 72:

Based on discussion w/ Kulwa & Murphy, I now feel that engorg can be strengthened without any need to go out of the open business... and maybe there is no real coupling between our problems with ASD/E + DDAR/E on the one hand, and our problem with CIA/NSA on the other.

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