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~~(S)~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D C

THE NRO STAFF

January 8, 1974

Mr. Plummer has seen

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. PLUMMER

SUBJECT: DISCOVERER XIV

Dr. McLucas asked for an assessment of the accuracy of the historical description of the DISCOVERER XIV mission (TAB A). I have determined that the technical parameters are generally correct, by consulting the NRO history prepared by Mr. Bob Perry and the CIA Program Office history published in the CIA Studies In Intelligence Periodical, Vol 17 No. 1-S. The statement that the capsule carried in it scientific data on propulsion, communications and orbital performance collected and stored in space is not accurate. The inclusion of this statement can probably be traced back to the cover story and unclassified information which appeared during the early days of the DISCOVERER program. At TAB B is an article from the June 1961 issue of The Airman magazine, which describes the DISCOVERER program in terms of its cover without ever divulging its true photographic mission. At TAB C is an extract from the STL Space Log, Volume 1, No. 2, September 1960. This describes the DISCOVERER XIV payload as being similar to DISCOVERER XIII, which did in fact carry a tape recorder for on-board data collection. DISCOVERER XIII carried a diagnostic payload only; if this had not proven successful an additional diagnostic mission would have been flown as DISCOVERER XIV and would have carried a tape recorder. Because DISCOVERER XIII was a successful mission, the decision was made to fly the CORONA camera payload immediately.

There are very few records left to reflect in detail the configuration of the various CORONA missions. In

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searching for the answer for Dr. McLucas' question I spoke with both Colonel Paul Worthman and Colonel Clarence (Lee) Battle, who were sure that there was no tape recorder on board DISCOVERER XIV. Mr. Roy Burks of CIA, who was part of the old CORONA team, could recall no recorder and referred me to Mr. [REDACTED] of General Electric, who reportedly catalogued [REDACTED] returning from space in General Electric recovery vehicles. Mr. [REDACTED] recalled no recorder but did not have ready access to [REDACTED] historical documentation. Through Major [REDACTED] in SAFSP, the LMSC people did go into the records and reported that the total instrumentation in the recovery vehicle for the DISCOVERER XIV mission consisted of telemetry indicating cold gas nozzle firing, deployment of the parachute cover, parachute deployment, and a tracking signal. The LMSC instrumentation records showed that there was no tape recorder in the recovery vehicle. Mr. [REDACTED] of Lockheed also confirmed this for me.

The inscription to accompany the DISCOVERER XIV capsule can be made correct by deleting that portion of the sentence which refers to returning scientific data collected and stored in space. At the right is a retyped inscription which is correct.

[REDACTED]

FREDERICK L. HOFFMANN
Lt Colonel, USAF

[Handwritten signature]

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