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22 APR 1963

**MEMORANDUM FOR Deputy Director, NRO**

**SUBJECT: NRO Aircraft Operations**

**Reference: DNRO memo for the DepSecDef, subj: Operations Aspects of the NRO, dtd 15 April (b) (1-63), with attachment (b) (1-63)**

Further to my 15 April note transmitting to you a copy of the referenced document, and to our subsequent discussion of this matter, I should like to clarify the intent of the proposed arrangement.

The proposed arrangement would have no effect whatever on the aircraft operations responsibilities presently carried out by the Director, Program B, or the functions of the CIA OPCEN. The Director, Program B, would continue to be responsible for preparation of operations plans for conduct of NRO aircraft overflights through use of aircraft and/or drones of projects for which responsibility is assigned to the Director, Program B. He would continue to be responsible for coordination of these proposed activities and arrangement for necessary support in exactly the same manner as presently employed.

However, the proposed arrangement would fill in some important missing links in the present NRO organization and procedures. Upon receipt of plans for proposed aircraft overflight activities, prepared by the Director, Program B for signature of the Director, NRO to the Special Group requesting approval to proceed, the Deputy for Operations, NRO Staff would review the proposed plans, obtain any necessary coordination with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, together with any recommendations or comments which might be appropriate. He would effect coordination of the proposed overflight activities with the peripheral reconnaissance program operated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and would discuss with the Director, NRO the results of his coordination and any comments or recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In the event that the work of the Deputy for Operations should result in no recommendations for

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change to the original proposals, or in the event that the Director, NRO should not concur with such recommendations which do result, the Director, NRO would sign and forward to the Special Group the original plans as prepared and transmitted by the Director, Program B. In the event that the Director, NRO should consider that changes should be made, he would discuss such changes with the Director, Program B, following which the Deputy for Operations would prepare a revised plan for the Director, NRO to forward to the Special Group. The Deputy for Operations, NRO Staff would arrange with the Director, Program B to be kept currently advised as to the status of each overflight in order that the Director, NRO Staff and appropriate JCS personnel could monitor actual progress of all NRO aircraft overflights.

Although the above procedure would result in an additional coordination step, it seems to me that this additional step is absolutely essential to the establishment of a sound NRO management structure. Present NRO aircraft overflight activities do involve support of resources presently or potentially assigned to unified and specified commands; for instance, the 4 April memorandum for the Special Group (SC-04377-63/KH) as presented to me for signature contained an outline of a proposed operational concept involving use of command resources under the auspices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as proposing the use of certain equipment in a manner to which the Joint Chiefs had previously expressed strong objection. As you know, certain future NRO plans will involve much more extensive support from resources under the control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Therefore, I feel that a formal mechanism must be established for coordinating these proposed activities with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on a workable, responsive basis consistent with the security restrictions which must apply. In addition, I would observe that the NRO, from its earliest inception, has been under the mandate to establish coordination of all NRO overflight activities with the peripheral reconnaissance program, and it is evident that so far no such formal coordination arrangements have been established. I also consider that there is merit in the concern recently expressed to me in a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the NRO have adequate support of military personnel with appropriate operational knowledge and operational experience.

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It would seem to me that all of these objectives can be met most easily, and with no effect on the CIA or the Director, Program B, by the arrangement proposed in the referenced memorandum.

Signed

**Brockway McMillan**  
Director  
National Reconnaissance Office

cc: DepSecDef  
Chuan JCS

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