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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

March 24, 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: General Stewart  
Director, NRO Staff

SUBJECT: Role of the DDNRO?

Over seven months have transpired since my coming aboard. During this time I have exercised relatively little initiative in formally defining my areas of interest and responsibility. It has been particularly a period of education and orientation during which it has seemed to me important to understand as best I can Dr. Flax's working methods as well as your own and to attempt to fit into them in the most useful way. I thought perhaps it would be useful at this point to summarize the way things look to me now.

1. The United States Intelligence Board,  
Particularly COMOR and Its Subgroups.

In my opening discussion with Dr. Flax on my arrival he indicated that by virtue of his experience in R&D program matters he would expect to take the initiative and carry the responsibility. He further indicated that by virtue of my background he would look to me to pay special attention, on his behalf, to matters related to the Board. Obviously, he did not delegate this responsibility but rather was indicating an area of emphasis.

As you review the last seven months in this regard, you are aware that I have shown considerable interest in the relations of COMOR and its subgroups to the NRO but have made an effort, on principle, to facilitate and aid wherever possible your efforts and those of the Staff rather than to supplant them. I could not ask for anyone to be more responsive in this regard than you have been. I feel there has been noticeable improvement principally because of your initiatives with the Chairman, COMOR and I here want to make special mention of your work in the SIGINT field. You have insured my participation in the Staff discussions on these questions to my satisfaction.

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As we look to the future and referring to our frequent discussions on the COMOR relationship as it involves [redacted] and [redacted] it has occurred to me that an improvement which might be instituted, and which I discussed briefly with Paul Worthman, is that on fairly major items which require a contribution from the NRO in COMOR (or USIB) matters [redacted] would submit to you either for your concurrence or would draft for your signature a quote of the COMOR minute followed by amplification comments of his own with identification of the officers or component elements of the NRO which need to be involved in seeking a solution of the problem. The presentation would include substantive and procedural suggestions, the former serving as a jumping-off place to move the problem along. If it were preferred that this be prepared for your signature as an instruction to component elements of the Staff, or even in the other case obviously the action might go any of several places. However, it seems to me that it would make sense and be a convenience if we could look [redacted] as the coordinator on such matters. Additionally, his role as coordinator would, I believe, strengthen his competence in representing the final views of the NRO; it would make him a much better negotiator in the COMOR arena. If such a procedure were instituted or if indeed some better idea can be contrived, I would consider it useful to me to know what is going on and to participate ex officio either bilaterally with [redacted] or with any Staff group which would give me a better feel for the problem and the possible solutions as well as possibly permit me at an early date to make some constructive suggestion.

The outcome of such deliberation, however, must emanate as an exercise of your responsibility. By virtue of our close working relationship, I would feel that the main lines of our position would be satisfactory to me and there should be no difficulty in identifying those matters which, prior to or in the midst of negotiation, would require policy guidance from Flax.

As you can see, this is in line with my oral discussion with you in trying to correct the bad habit which [redacted] and I have gotten into and which, as I said, I feel is an error and must be corrected.

When a paper is going to the Board, it seems to me here again [redacted] must insure earliest possible receipt of the papers to be discussed so that both you and I have a chance to read them and to move quickly to get a systematic, and if possible, appropriate Staff analysis and development of a

briefing paper for Dr. Flax. My participation here again should not affect your responsibility for the preparation of that paper for Flax.

2. Relationship between the SOC and the Program Directors.

Here again I at once recognize your responsibility. However, it is an area of great interest to me because I believe it bears so critically on the operational achievement of the requirements of the Board. I would hope with the change of personalities, i.e., the substitution of [redacted] that there would be fewer sparks and more importantly a better working relationship between the Director, SOC and [redacted] or the West Coast. While friendly relations are desirable, however, that is not the objective. What I am concerned about is the recognition by all parties concerned of a viable, substantive relationship which includes not only the ready access to information but the assured definition of responsibilities, which at times have been in question, by you or if necessary by Dr. Flax. It seems to me that in many areas we have discussed, you and I see very much eye to eye. We need to get, in a patient way, both the Agency and the Program A to accept a coordinating responsibility on the part of the NRO Staff--the recent Carl Duckett instance being a case in point. It seems to me there is an underlying current, disturbing to me, which relates to the desires of the West Coast to limit the activities of the SOC. Although I think I accurately recognize that this exists, I confess I cannot as yet define the problems--let alone the solutions. In this case also it seems to me that my role is one of keeping informed and consulting with you. In general my objective must be to strengthen your role rather than to intrude on it. Where I should intrude, I normally would expect it to be as a result of our consultation.

3. Security.

Although I have no strong native penchant in this field, the last eleven years have forced me into constant concern and some responsibility in security. I have taken occasion to discuss security questions which have come across my desk with [redacted]. At an appropriate point in security discussions, as well as in other questions, I feel that Staff action can profit on occasion from consultation among several of us. I might mention in this connection, though it relates to all papers going to Dr. Flax that I recently noticed a paper from [redacted] to Flax on the Dr. [redacted] case. I discussed

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this with [redacted] explaining that, were I Flax, I would not know automatically whether or not the Director of the Staff was aware of this problem and had concurred in the recommendation. I feel that papers from the Staff going to Flax should be through the Director of the Staff and should be initialed by either you or Worthman.

It seems to me also that in certain instances which have to be decided case by case a determination should be made as to whether there should be a concurrence line for me.

4. NRO Mission and Functions in Staffing.

It seems to me that we have worked out quite satisfactorily understandings on these questions; essentially you carry the prime responsibility. My role is mainly the one that I have been pursuing--aiding you wherever I usefully can.



6. National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

To a greater degree the comments pertaining to [redacted] above are also applicable to NASA, explainable I think in large part by the fact that the NASA problem has a heavy Sec Def aspect.

7. Film Processing: Production and R&D.

I have interested myself in this subject in various ways for a number of years--I suppose in part because it is so closely related to the final acquisition of information. The OPIC question still is around though slumbering, the R&D question I have recently gone into with Capt [redacted] I leave you to choose the appropriate time but it seems to me that Capt [redacted] should be asked to prepare an R&D briefing for Flax at which you and I and [redacted] would be present. [redacted] has pretty well sorted this out in terms of Westover and EK

though he has not yet ground in the additional R&D efforts of both CIA and Program A. You and I see eye to eye on this problem vis-a-vis Sheldon, quite apart from what final determination Flax may care to make.

8. Aircraft.

I am very much interested in this area which embraces the U-2, the OXCART, the SR-71, the drones, and the [redacted]. I made some effort as you know to get hold of a handle for [redacted] by having Flax briefed on it. I am afraid that hasn't gone anywhere. Perhaps my confusion is shared with regard to the NRO responsibilities in these areas though varying from case to case [redacted] has recently suggested that there are problems in some of these areas which he thinks I could very well dig into. Here again, however, I, perhaps mistakenly, feel that it isn't a question of me in the first instance, it is a question of the Director of the Staff and his Staff in which I am a contributor.

9. Programs.

I expose no secret to confess my shortcomings in the engineering and technical and contracting aspects of our programs. I guess at the moment I am in the role of a student insofar as I can learn anything. I suppose I tend to have views predominantly in the management area, in the relations with contractors.

10. Budget.

Here is an area where I am quite confused. As I indicated to [redacted] during one of our drinking bouts up at Rochester, I have a feeling that he pre-empts certain programmatic decisions where the initiative more rightfully belongs in your hands though I cannot argue this very intelligently.

Summary Comment. I am sure that some of my colleagues either here or in the Agency would be prone, if they read the foregoing, to find me not sufficiently aggressive in carving out my role in the NRO. My thoughts above are as of the moment and most certainly I am flexible. However, as I have told you on several occasions, I am very strong in my belief in the importance of the role of the Director of the Staff and I feel it is in the interests of a successful NRO that that position be strengthened and depended upon. There may

arise occasions in which Flax wishes to pin a specific responsibility on me beyond what I gather to be his wish in regard to my paragraph 1. It seems to me, however, that this is something that must come about and cannot be contrived.

I would appreciate an opportunity to sit down with you and discuss these notes soon.

[redacted]  
James Q. Reber