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"NEED TO KNOW" BASISTHE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

AUG 18 1959



Dear Mr. President:

We have re-examined, in the light of your questions, certain aspects of the CANES project sponsored by the Advanced Research Projects Agency and recently proposed for development approval by the Department of Defense.

First, the members of the U. S. Intelligence Board, representing CIA, the State Department, Defense, and the three military departments, subscribe, with one exception, to the view that the intelligence to be gained from the project is well worth its relatively modest cost. The CANES device would transmit signals from Soviet radars and other electronic equipment operating anywhere in the USSR, whereas now, from either ground-based or airborne receivers, only those radars established near the Soviet borders can be heard and identified. Even though other much more comprehensive programs for electronic intercept from satellites are planned, including one, the Air Force SAMOS, which is scheduled also to begin in 1960, the majority of the Intelligence Board members feel that this early try is useful to the development of this new field of intelligence collection. They consider that CANES does not duplicate the larger SAMOS project and will in fact provide additional intelligence. They further feel that the risk of detection of the project by the USSR is slight.

The opposed view by the Air Force is that this project is duplicative in coverage to the already programmed SAMOS project; and that this project, programmed to be lofted in TRANSIT II, is contemporaneous with SAMOS. TRANSIT II is scheduled to be fired in March 1960 and to remain aloft one year. SAMOS vehicles are to start in April 1960. Thus for eleven of its twelve months' life CANES parallels and duplicates SAMOS. If CANES does not succeed in TRANSIT II and is lofted by TRANSIT III it would be scheduled well after the beginning of SAMOS.

As to the scientific view of the project, the Defense Director of Research and Engineering considers that, while the technical advancement represented by CANES is not very great and would not warrant the expense of a separate launching, it is well worth the much smaller cost of being included as a package in an already approved vehicle.

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The possibility that the retransmitted signals from CANES would be detected and identified in the USSR has been examined with particular care. Detection by electronic search and intercept of the signals would require much more powerful and sensitive equipment than that normally used in intercept by this country, and even then the chances of hearing the briefly audible signals would be about one in a hundred. Unusual efforts are being made to hold knowledge of the project to a limited few, particularly the transmitting frequency to be employed. Administrative control will be vested exclusively in ARPA, and all construction, logistics, and operations in the project can be carried on exclusively within the Navy and within the National Security Agency. The Department of Defense considers, therefore, that detection would be extremely unlikely.

In the event, however, that the device was detected and its general purpose ascertained, the Secretary of State believes that its employment would be very unlikely to harm the United States' relations with the Soviet Union.

The Secretary of State thus recommends that the project be approved with the proviso that periods during which the device obtains and transmits data be subject to approval by the President on the recommendation of the Secretary of State.

The project is therefore submitted again for your approval. I should be glad to answer any further questions you may have.

With great respect, I am

Faithfully yours,



The President

The White House

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