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This document contains information
referring to Project CORONA

25 November 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR: Major General Jacob E. Smart
Assistant Vice Chief of Staff, USAF

SUBJECT : Distribution of Responsibilities for CORONA

1. Two papers drafted and approved in April 1958 give a brief outline of the responsibilities of the several organizations concerned with Project CORONA. The first paper was a Project Outline submitted under date of 15 April 1958 to the White House for approval after approval by Mr. Roy W. Johnson for the Advanced Research Projects Agency, Mr. Richard E. Horner for the Air Force, Brigadier General Comend J. Rittland for the Air Force Ballistic Missile Division, and Dr. James R. Killian. The second document was a Work Statement given to the prime contractor under date of 25 April 1958 which had been drafted jointly by representatives of BMD and this Agency.

2. The following is the paragraph in the Project Outline which deals with the administration of the program:

"CORONA is being carried out under the authority of the Advanced Research Projects Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency with the support and participation of the U. S. Air Force. ARPA has authorized, and will exercise general technical supervision over, the development of the vehicle. Detailed supervision of vehicle development is being performed by the Air Force Ballistic Missile Division acting as agent for ARPA. The Ballistic Missile Division is responsible also for the provision of necessary ground facilities, which are in any case required for the WS-117L program. CIA is participating in supervision of the technical development, especially as applied to the actual reconnaissance equipment, is undertaking all procurement that must be handled covertly, and has general responsibility for cover and for the maintenance of security. In the operational phase, actual missile

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launchings will be carried out at Cochs Air Force Base by technical staffs of the companies concerned. Tracking will be carried out from stations being established by the Ballistic Missile Division. Recovery will be accomplished by a Navy Task Force. The line of command for these field activities of launching, tracking, and recovery will be through the Ballistic Missile Division. Subject to approval by the appropriate political authorities, the general schedule of launchings will be determined by the availability of vehicles and launching facilities. Specific timing within this schedule will be determined so far as possible on the basis of weather prevailing over target areas. For both cover and control purposes, weather will be reported through an already existing CIA channel and firing dates will be selected by the Central Intelligence Agency."

3. The following is the paragraph from the prime contractor's Work Statement which sets forth the procedure for supervision of the contract by the U. S. Government:

"Technical direction of the program is the joint responsibility of several agencies of the Government. In the interest of effective management, however, such direction will be provided primarily by and through the Air Force Ballistic Missile Division acting as the agent for all interested components of the Government. A Project Officer will be established in BMD as the single day-by-day point of contact for the contractor. This Officer will have authority to make on-the-spot decisions within the scope of the work statement on all matters pertaining to the program other than those of major importance. From time to time the Government agencies concerned will jointly review the progress of the program. The Government will make arrangements to permit the prompt rendering of major decisions concerning the program which cannot be made by the Project Officer. Special security measures will be required throughout the program. The complete security plan, clearance of facilities and of individuals knowledgeable of the program, and other matters relating to security will be under the direction of a designated authority within the Government. The contractor will provide such special security measures within his own facilities, subcontractors' facilities or Government facilities provided for this Project, as may be required to conform with the security plan."

4. With respect to the opening sentence of the statement quoted in paragraph 2. above, it should be noted that the wording was carefully devised to give expression to a White House desire. It had been expressly stipulated

when the Project received oral approval that all funding for research and development and for the procurement of hardware should be provided by the Central Intelligence Agency and by the Advanced Research Projects Agency and that the Ballistic Missile Division should act as their executive agent in the management of the program.

5. In practice, the management of this program was handled exactly in accordance with the statement quoted in paragraph 3. above and proceeded extremely smoothly until major financial problems developed in September 1958 and gave rise to a protracted review of both the financial status and the content of both the CORONA and the SENTRY programs. In the course of the review, a number of individuals and organizations became involved in managerial decisions concerning (a) the allocation of costs, (b) the best use to be made of certain of the Thor-boosted flights in the newly-named DISCOVERY series, (c) cover stories and publicity, and (d) possible modifications in the SENTRY program. Such multiple participation in these decisions inevitably gave rise to considerable confusion.

6. It now appears that the first three sets of decisions have been substantially made and that the fourth is unlikely directly to affect the DISCOVERY series, or within it the schedule of CORONA flights. There would appear to be a possibility, therefore, that responsibility for day-to-day managerial decisions could revert in most matters to the Ballistic Missile Division and in certain others, especially covert procurement, cover, and security, to this Agency. The Advanced Research Projects Agency, Headquarters USAF, and Headquarters ARDC/USAF would of course wish to follow the program and would be concerned with any policy decisions.

RICHARD M. BISSELL, JR.
Special Assistant to the Director

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