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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 18, 1965

Reconnaissance Panel Views on the
MOL Development Program

It is the purpose of this paper to summarize views of the Reconnaissance Panel on the MOL development program and, in particular, the Panel's interpretation of the agreement reached between Dr. Hornig and Dr. Brown on August 23, 1965.

The Panel is convinced that a high resolution [redacted] orbital reconnaissance system is a high priority national goal. Although the Panel concurs that the proposed manned MOL can attain such resolution and that the presence of a man on board the spacecraft can enhance certain aspects of the mission, the Panel concludes that a properly designed unmanned system can, in an equivalent time, attain the same resolution with acceptable mission reliability. In addition, because of the great significance of the data that MOL will obtain, the Panel foresees a future requirement for operational missions on a continuing basis and considers it likely that in such an operational program the unmanned system will show advantages for the routine missions, and manned system for situations which require special capabilities. It therefore believes that the MOL development program can and should support an operational program which could use both manned and unmanned versions of the system in whatever manner is most consistent with the individual mission requirements, the continuing need for economic operations and the international situation that may exist at the time.

The Panel concludes that certain elements of the manned and unmanned systems can be common. In particular, the automated systems for navigation and control, pointing and focusing, differential IMC over the format and on orbit alignment of the optics should be developed both to realize the full potential of the optics during unmanned operations and also to enhance the performance of the manned system by relieving the man of routine, demanding tasks. The Panel observes that a properly planned development program can accommodate identity between major elements of the system (primarily the optics,

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the subsystems mentioned above, the laboratory module and the booster) if the requirements of both manned and automated missions are fully considered in the initial systems design.

The Panel recognizes that the automatic film handling and recovery systems necessary for an unmanned MOL might not be appropriate in the manned system and, conversely, that the Gemini spacecraft would not be needed during unmanned operation. It is considered likely therefore that a package containing multiple film recovery capsules will have to be developed to replace the Gemini for planned unmanned missions.

The Panel interprets the Hornig-Brown agreement to mean that the initial system definition will result in a design consistent with the above and that the separate modules and conversion equipment necessary for automatic operation will be developed and built concurrently with the manned MOL and with a financial and management priority equal to that given the manned modules. In connection with the flight demonstration of the unmanned system referred to in the agreement, the Panel assumes that a flight test of the complete automatic system, including the separately developed equipment, will be included in the MOL test program as early as the test program will reasonably allow. Although the agreement specified this as 9 months after the first manned test - (at the time of the agreement, this period represented a compromise between Panel and DOD opinions about when the unmanned system could be ready) - it is expected that the Air Force Program Definition Studies will define a more appropriate schedule which includes both manned and unmanned tests in a sequence which technical considerations show to be equally advantageous to both systems.

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