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~~TOP SECRET~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

August 24, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. NAKA

Thank you. This is helpful. Bob H.

SUBJECT: Manned Space Flights Over the Soviet Union,
MOL/STS

We have done some research regarding the history of deliberations of MOL overflights of the Soviet Union. As near as we can determine there never was a specific formal addressing of this question. There were two associated questions considered during the 1965 time period which relate to this issue to some degree. The first, in July 1965, was the creation of an in-house DOD MOL policy paper which addressed the public information aspects and international reactions to MOL. NSAM 2454 provided the main basis for this policy paper. Thus, the fact of manned flights over the Soviet Union was perceived to be legitimate and peaceful. Operations of MOL, in terms of its reconnaissance mission, were to be conducted within a carefully disciplined security environment.

The second, in September 1965, was a NSAM 156 meeting where the subject of a State initiative of an offer of pre-launch inspecting of MOL was discussed. This initiative was subsequently beaten down by OSD/NRO as unnecessary. Stimulating this initiative was public agitation by the Soviets over a potential "weapons in orbit" situation.

It appears then, that even though MOL was to overfly the Soviet Union, the feeling was that the international pressures would not be significant, and that the NSC 2454 directive was still valid.

With regard to the expensive dog leg maneuvers by the STS, I spoke with Col Ralph Ford. He says that the primary

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reason for designing in the lateral cross-range capability was for crew safety and orbit flexibility. The matter of optionally not overflying the Soviet Union on launch is purely a side benefit and not the reason for the capability. It is felt that this characteristic provides a flexibility which might be useful in time of international uncertainty in minimizing provocation.

It is interesting also that neither GEMINI nor APOLLO has overflown the Soviet Union. The inclination of those earth orbital flights was 32 degrees. About one-half of China was overflown and hand-held photography was obtained of the southern half of that country. The contingency plans for APOLLO 13, 14, and 15, if needed, would have caused overflight of the Soviet Union, however.

If you wish any further elaboration on the subject, please let us know.

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HAROLD S. COYLE, JR.
Major, USAF

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Bud,

At staff meeting on Friday we discussed manned space flights over the Soviet Union. The STS people are planning elaborate orbits complete with expensive dog leg maneuvers to avoid over-flying the Soviet Union while launching their payloads.

Dr. Naka pointed out that there must have been considerable deliberation before the decision was made to permit manned MOL spacecraft to overfly the Soviets. Would you please investigate and find out what considerations were involved in the MOL Program?

I pointed out that the Gemini and Apollo programs overflew China--and I thought the Soviet Union--and we have released photography taken by hand-held cameras during those missions. Dr. Naka replied that he had thought the Southern Soviet Union must have been traversed but that Dr. Seamans (and because of his NASA association he should know) said that we had not overflown the Soviet Union with our manned spacecraft. This question needs to be answered.

I suggest a short paper for Dr. Naka's use.

Please handle.

Jitz