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20 August 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR : Deputy Director, Plans

SUBJECT : Political Approval for CORONA Mission 9004

1. As you know, the next CORONA firing, Mission 9004, is programmed for 1 September 1959. This mission will require political approval, the timing of which is necessarily geared to the departure of the President for Europe on 26 August 1959. In this context, I heard the President last week mention to Secretary Dillon that both General Goodpaster and Major Eisenhower would be going with him on his trip. Accordingly, you may wish to consider requesting political sanction certainly no later than 24 August, and since you will be necessarily preoccupied with the CORONA-ARGON meetings on 24 and 25 August, it might be well to regard this Friday, 21 August, as the cutoff date on your personal calendar.

2. As a matter of interest to you in this matter of CORONA approvals, I think you might find several comments useful, arising from my visit to Gettysburg a week ago today:

a. The President seemed both interested and reassured by the fact that the mission profile for Mission 9003 was the same as for Mission 9002, which he approved on 28 July 1959. I later commented to Major Eisenhower on this fact, and he said that he thought that succeeding approvals would be largely pro forma in cases where the projected mission profile was the same as one the President had approved previously.

b. The President asked me directly what the chances were that this shot (specifically 9003) might come down in Russia. I replied that the only odds I had ever heard quoted on such a mishap ran on a percentage of 3 in 100,000. He said then that he thought it might be a pretty good idea after all if one of these shots came down in Russia and fell into Russian hands where they could see what equipment was being carried. He then added that he thought he could make "a hell of a good story out of such an occurrence."

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c. At lunch after the meeting, Major Eisenhower observed that the President has what he called a "simple faith" in automated surveillance devices like CORONA. He said that he personally thought we would not encounter any climate of opinion unfavorable to CORONA such as he said we occasionally encountered on [REDACTED]. I observed that from where I sat, at this stage of the state of the art in the missile field, the manned surveillance device [REDACTED] probably deserved a greater confidence factor than that, to which he tacitly agreed.

3. If there is anything this office can do to assist in coordination or political approval on Mission 9004, we shall await your instructions.

[REDACTED]
Chief, Admin. Branch, DPD
DD/P

[REDACTED]
Distr:
[REDACTED]