



27 November 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Science and Technology

SUBJECT: Program E

1. Sporadically since we talked last I have done some thinking regarding Program E in a limited attempt to assess whether at this time it is desirable for CIA to take such a bold step in "getting back into the satellite business". Secondly, if such a bold step was deemed necessary and desirable, would it not be best to possibly temper that step somewhat as one would finesse a move in bridge or chess as opposed to the head-on ramrod tactic.

2. ~~Although~~ I am personally encouraged, as I am sure many others who have fought the heretofore losing battle with the NRO, that CIA through ~~initiative~~<sup>INITIATIVE</sup> of people like yourself is beginning to take a firm and undaunted position regarding the responsibilities and prerogatives of CIA in the National Reconnaissance Program. Upon reflection, <sup>however</sup> I feel that there are many reasons why CIA should not opt to take the giant step of attempting to establish within the NRO Program E located at the West Coast. The establishment and location of such an office may be our eventual desire, however, I think that it may be far more digestible, though equally less palatable, for the Air Force to accept a less dramatic measure.

Declassified and Released by the NRO

In Accordance with E. O. 12958

on NOV 26 1997

3. In effect, the establishment of Program E is not of itself the conception of novel functions and personalities. Since Program E will consist of the CORONA Program and follow-on satellite search systems of Program <sup>B</sup>A, we have in effect split off from OSA those same responsibilities which it had ~~in~~ <sup>SURED</sup> to form a part of Program B. In essence, the assets of OSA would now be proselytized to form the nucleus, yea the majority, of key Program E slots. Hence, what has been accomplished is that OSA has been dissected and a portion of that organization earmarked for incorporation into Program E. By so doing, we will prevent the experience and knowledge which has rested in OSA from the very beginning of the CORONA Program to be passed on to the new Program E. <sup>AS WELL AS PROVIDE CONTINUED BENEFIT TO PROGRAM B.</sup>

4. It is quite possible that you have assessed the delinquency of OSA in maintaining a vigorous and dynamic satellite effort as really not being competent or more possibly oriented towards a satellite effort, that the consuming desire for active aircraft programs leaves little room or strength to carry out a vital satellite effort. I think that few in OSA will contest that the responsibility for a satellite program has laid idle or rested on the "back burner" in OSA. This fact of life, however, is not the result of indifference by OSA, but rather the aftermath of two years of erosion which this Agency has permitted inspite of frantic efforts by members of OSA to prevent. It would seem somewhat short of justice ~~to~~ at this time to deprive OSA from actively participating in a program which like "the voice in the wilderness" <sup>it</sup> had cried out <sup>to</sup> ~~for~~ protect long ago.

5. Additionally, and without attempting to be a political pundit, I would venture to say that the Air Force will die hard before permitting CIA to establish such a strong foothold in the satellite business; i. e., assuming all responsibility for all search systems now and in the future. Strong reluctance on their part can only mean that the issue must be resolved at the highest levels. I cannot conceive that the Administration will venture to entertain assuming a decision-making role at this time, but will more or less seek to maintain a status quo for the time being. If forced to this final authority, it is quite plausible that CIA will lose not only this immediate battle, but any foothold which it now possesses through CORONA in the satellite program.

6. I would propose then that rather than establish Program E, that you attempt to secure for CIA the payload responsibilities which it has controlled for the past three to four years and has only recently begun to lose through the Agency's own indecisiveness. In effect, you can establish your Program E organization within Program B, thus permitting it to grow within the protective and experienced structure of Program B, <sup>+</sup> DD5/T, ~~for~~ and at <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ propitious time segregate it to the West Coast at your own choosing.

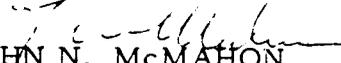
7. I can foresee nothing but trouble in attempting to establish a Program E at the West Coast divorced from the harbor of CIA and torn between the dual channels of responding to the Director of NRO <sup>on</sup> ~~and~~ some things, and the DD/S&T, CIA, for others, and the ever-present overlapping responsibilities. I submit that far more can be

achieved in accomplishing our own ends if you establish that organization internally, physically and organizationally, to the womb of the Agency during its embryo state, and when it is properly functioning transfer it, if desirable, to the West Coast.

8. Moreover, I sincerely feel that the Agency, i. e., DD/S&T specifically, and all its organizations and all of its personalities can be more readily called upon in putting the best foot of CIA forward in the satellite field if that organization responsible for CIA satellite activities is geographically <sup>integrated</sup> located within the DD/S&T such as Program B ~~is~~ now <sup>is</sup>. The added advantages such as facility of communications and more important proximity to command control are obvious. I think it is quite feasible for CIA to get back into the satellite program through the subtle guise of reaffirming our responsibilities in CORONA payload and the follow-on systems of which we have precedence; i. e., the naming of covert satellites under Program B for our fiscal year 1964 and 1965 budgets. You can readily introduce the personality you may desire eventually to be ~~D~~ Director of Program E to head the satellite effort under Program B. This will permit not only a gradual weening and training period, but also permit the satellite effort to take advantage of the administrative support structure already available to OSA; i. e., contracting, security, communication, not to mention experience.

9. The above does not mean that you could not assign some one person to the West Coast to be Program B(E's) representative

assume would be a highly technical individual for camera systems,  
could work closely, if not physically, with Colonel Murphy, and provided to  
some extent the centralization of management now  
desired.

  
JOHN N. McMAHON