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Apr. 1964

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Memo by Lt. Col. Webb,

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1. The most probable effect of the move by [redacted] to establish a resident officer at [redacted] (A/P) as a single point of contact with the contractor will be the materialization of policies and practices that further isolate the PI from those that have technical control over the instrument that deliver his payload. Phenomenal strides in the field of long-range search and surveillance photography have been made by the CORONA system because it has been guided by the Agency, motivated by the stark reality that intelligence must be collected now and forever. Furthermore the Agency was fully and constantly mindful and responsive to the photo interpreter's problems and needs as well as to the operational problems involved.

In the past two years, since the contractor work statement passed "day-to-day technical supervision" to the AFSSD, Agency interests in the technical aspects of the program has had to be accomplished largely by diplomacy and Indians holding hands with Indians. While this has not ever been the most dignified way to accomplish the logical, it had been fairly successful especially when there was in existence at

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AP an SETD organization with a measure of independence and freedom of expression that would allow it to function as an advisory agent of the government.

This was dealt what turned out to be a fatal blow by AFSSD with the tacit approval of the Agency in November 1962, after a very successful year of CORONA operation, when the Technical Direction was separated from System Engineering and taken to Inglewood. It is my opinion that this act marked the technical and operational decline of the CORONA program. The skunk works philosophy was destroyed and every idea concerning the system had to be cleared through a flight schedule--minded office 400 miles to the south. When this divorce was not emphatically denied, nor vigorously opposed by the Agency it had a severe affect on the attitude and morale at AP and consequently on the philosophical and technical approach to the CORONA mission.

The contractor correctly assessed the situation and quickly turned to AFSSD for the guidance it had been previously been taking from the Agency. Although the Agency still handled the contract it was in reality only the disbursing agent. Payday was set by AFSSD. AFSSD in turn emboldened by the lack of

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authoritative opposition to the TD grab began to put constant and increasingly severe pressure on the contractor to make organizational changes at AP that would have the effect of integrating the remaining Systems Engineering effort with the hardware effort. I say again that this change was made at the insistence of [REDACTED] even though I know that [REDACTED] LMSC answered negatively when asked by Mr. Wheelon if any government pressure was used.

With the virtual dissolution of SE in December 1963 went the freedom of exchange of ideas and information. Decisions that adversely affected the payload were being made and ordered into execution by [REDACTED] (then [REDACTED] and the Agency's man had to find out the hard way--and sometimes not soon enough. An example is in the decision by [REDACTED] even against the advice of what remained of SE, to shorten the environmental chamber tests of M-25, M-26 and M-27 to one day, with a full payload, thus preserving the sanctity of the flight date and violating the validity of tests for susceptibility to CORONA discharge. The flow of information was so restricted that I did not know about the invalid test until I was examining the film from M-26 TASC. M-25 film has been unusually clean in that it

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showed not even the familiar start-up corona on the first hour or five frames. When this same cleanliness was exhibited by M-26 I became alarmed and asked for a record of the chamber and instrument section pressures. This record clearly showed that the outgassing from the rapidly expended film did not allow the instrument section to enter the pressure regime where corona discharge is most likely to occur--below 10 microns. It was too late to help M-25 --it did not orbit anyhow--but I tried to get a valid test on M-26 and M-27 to no avail. I refuse to sign off M-26 at the loading. Capt. Johnson, AFSSD signed off, it flew and it came down severely damaged by corona.

This example is one of many that can point out the fact that one cannot act unless one get information and information on the technical side does not come voluntarily to the Agency's representatives at AP.

If experience is any teacher we can expect the [REDACTED] take-over at AP to subordinate the C/M payload to other aspects such as flight schedules, auxilliary payloads, etc. Example above. There will be changes and deletions that will

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affect the quality of the product. Example above. Further example is ~~is~~ previous detrimental stand of [REDACTED] on horizon cameras, S/I's etc. In other words there will be no repeat no voluntary consultation with NPIC on the effect of a proposed change, or on NPIC needs.

If the [REDACTED] A/P resident officer's charter [REDACTED] Msg [REDACTED] stands unchallenged before-the-fact information channels to the Agency will be completely and tragically constipated.

Webb (10 April 64)

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