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set 7 Sept 78

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: CIA Participation in CORONA in Los Angeles

1. You have asked us to explore the feasibility of inserting CIA technical people into [Redacted] facility in the CORONA program in response to Mr. Vance's suggestion and to relate this to the arrangement you and [Redacted] have made to delegate our contracting and security responsibilities in CORONA from Washington to our officer in Los Angeles. We see a very attractive possibility in this proposal, if we can provide the terms of reference and backup support to our people that will give them a chance to play a meaningful role.

2. If the proposal is to send CIA technical people to work directly under the command of [Redacted] the CORONA [Redacted] Programs Manager, we are strongly opposed because:

a) Past experience persuades all of us that they will not be allowed to participate in CORONA in any significant way quite independent of the agreements which we may reach in Washington. This has been true of the Army man assigned to Argon, the Navy man assigned to Advanced Projects, and our own CIA contracts and security men who have served on [Redacted] staff for the past two years.

b) By simply seconding CIA staff people to the Program [Redacted] office, we would assume partial responsibility for a program over which we had no real influence and which is in periodic trouble.

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c) We are all persuaded that this would set a **disasterous precedent for the management** of [REDACTED] such a step is not at all in our plans.

We are convinced that it is far preferable to bow out of the CORONA program entirely than to proceed along such a path. However, we do not assume that this is the bargain which has been struck.

3. The manner in which we would like to proceed builds around a senior CIA man who would be posted in Los Angeles and be located with [REDACTED] group. He would be responsible for those CIA activities which are now contributing to the CORONA program and give the Air Force people a single point of contact, close at hand, for all aspects of the program now under CIA. Specifically, he would be responsible for:

a) The payload contracts (Lockheed, Itek, and GE) via the CIA contracting officer who would be located with him in [REDACTED] area.

b) The security of the payload through the local security man.

c) Two or more, within reason, CIA technical people who will be assigned to him to work in CORONA.

d) The assembly, installation and check-out facility (SKUNKWORKS) at Palo Alto where the payloads are assembled and tested, which is now manned by CIA personnel as follows:

- (1) two operations officers
- (2) one technical man (to be assigned)
- (3) four communicators
- (4) one security man
- (5) one secretary

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This senior man and his team would be responsive to [REDACTED] but would retain their lines of command, funding, communication, etc., back to DD/S&T.

4. We would propose to back up our West Coast CORONA team technically with the in-house assets of DD/S&T. Specifically, we would commit the personnel of the Special Activities Staff ([REDACTED] etc.) as need be to support him. We could also ensure that the optics capability of ORD and [REDACTED] would be available as support. We also have the depth of cover support, contractors and security, available here at Headquarters to backstop the two men in Los Angeles to whom the CORONA responsibility would be delegated.

5. We had already proposed to establish a covert support facility in Los Angeles to provide communications, logistics, contract and security support to our new CIA satellite programs. This would require two communicators and an additional security man, plus a small facility in the airport area. We would propose to use this as the all-important channel of communications to the SKUNKWORKS in Palo Alto and CIA Headquarters in Langley. It also provides our team with local backup and support.

6. Our proposition really turns on the availability of a suitable CIA staff employee, with both technical and management qualifications, who can move quickly into the senior role. [REDACTED] of our staff has these qualifications, having managed the entire [REDACTED] program for [REDACTED] until recently, and can assume the responsibility in Los Angeles in two weeks time. The security man [REDACTED] and contracting officer [REDACTED] are already in place - with nothing to do - and can rapidly assume the support

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responsibilities which we propose to delegate to them. We believe that we can make available or recover the two additional technical men within two months, perhaps sooner. In short, we are in the fortunate position of being able to place a strong team on site rapidly, if we decide to move.

7. However, the success of such a venture depends on the terms of reference which we provide for our senior man on site. The demonstrated reluctance of [REDACTED] organization to accept CIA people means that we cannot simply ask our man to move out and try to work his way in. This is why we feel it important to subordinate the SKUNKWORKS and contractor-security function to him so that we will have some initial equity in the venture. There are other prerogatives with which we must provide him:

a) Guaranteed participation in all contractor/supplier meetings, affecting the payload and hopefully the entire system.

b) A well-defined and satisfactory relationship with [REDACTED] who now plays a systems engineering role in all payload contracts controlled by CIA.

c) A firm role in the configuration control board or whatever new coordination mechanism is established for the system.

8. All of these arrangements, by themselves, do not make a viable situation out of the unsatisfactory one. We consider it essential that the CIA group charged with these other functions in CORONA also have the responsibility for the technical direction of the payload contracts, in accordance with decision of CCB and as approved by [REDACTED]. You may

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not feel that this is negotiable at the present time; however, in our view this proviso is the key to a meaningful Agency participation. It has the further advantage of eliminating the present division of responsibility and authority which has plagued the program. If this arrangement cannot be negotiated (or at least agreed to for implementation within some reasonable time) we suggest that this concept of Agency participation be discarded.

9. We must insist that funds for the payload contractors be provided to Program B [REDACTED] directly, who in turn will make them available to the contracting officer in Los Angeles. It must be remembered that this officer is working with a delegated authority from OSA under CIA policy guidance and cannot properly use this authority to spend [REDACTED] money. This runs counter to McMillan's proposal to fund the program through [REDACTED] but have us somehow do the contracting. If this is to be done, we are best out of the whole program.

10. Given the present status of CIA participation in CORONA, we feel that the Agency should withdraw from the program entirely. This is contrary to my recommendation of one year ago, but reflects a realistic appraisal of our position after a year's decline. If we are to stay in the program, we cannot expect to slide back up the same slope. Nor should we lend our name, via several people, to a program which has long since passed out of our hands. I do believe that we have found a possible way to implement your suggestion and keep our present equity alive, by playing a meaningful role technically.

ALBERT D. WHEELON
Deputy Director
for
Science and Technology

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