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23 October 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD [redacted]

SUBJECT: CORONA Trip Report

1. During the period 14 - 17 October 1958, a trip was made to the Palo Alto area, the purpose of which was to attend scheduled conferences and to coordinate matters pertaining to Project CORONA. On 15 October, the undersigned attended the VS 117-L program review conference at LMSD; 16 and 17 October were devoted to the monthly CORONA progress meeting and coordination of CORONA matters.

a. VS 117-L Program Review Conference - Items which are listed below were considered to have a possible bearing on CORONA.

(1) Pad facilities - Some minor construction still remains to be completed. There is also a lack of equipment which is expected to be delivered in time. No slippage effects expected.

(2) Tracking stations - Some construction still remains and completion is expected so that all tracking stations will be operational no later than 30 November. An operational exercise has been scheduled for 1 December by BMD.

(3) Integrated countdown - Is still in work between Douglas and LMSD. No difficulty expected.

(4) Mating of vehicle and nose cone - To be accomplished between 15 and 20 November. No problems expected.

(5) Subsystem C - The preliminary visual system design is expected by January 1959; the [redacted] version by February 1959; and the infra-red version by June 1959. In addition, the proposed pioneer visual flight version is expected by March 1960.

[redacted]

This document contains information referring to Project CORONA

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(6) Subsystem E - The first flight for the 6 inch version is expected by November 1959, and the first flight of the 36 inch version by May of 1960.

(7) Subsystem L - The bio-med flights, numbers 3, 4, 7, 10, and 14, are still scheduled. There was no indication at the meeting that any of these flights might be cancelled. The payload (mousecage) for flight #3 has been received at LMSD.

b. Practically the entire WS 117-L conference was devoted to the THOR boost phase or program IIIA. Following the general review, [redacted] from BMD gave a brief "pep" talk to the group. He emphasized the necessity for meeting the first flight date in December, saying that it was extremely important to the Air Force, as well as the government, that this be done prior to the first of the year. He further felt that since the first firing is becoming more imminent, the program review meetings should be held approximately every two to three weeks, instead of once a month as at present. He further stated that he was calling a meeting at Inglewood for 6 and 7 November to go over in detail the factors which may effect the first launching. He also asked that Lockheed be prepared to present a plan to recover the one month slippage which has already occurred, as well as any subsequent slippage which may occur. Following [redacted] talk, [redacted] confirmed LMSD's appreciation for the importance of meeting the schedule and gave assurance that this would not be at the expense of quality. He also agreed with [redacted] proposal that they call program meetings more frequently. I felt attendance at this meeting was quite beneficial and gave me a detailed insight into the functioning, as well as the progress of development, of the basic hardware. Of special note is the fact that throughout the entire meeting BMD representatives (especially Col. Oder and [redacted]) were very active in delving into the technical whys and wherefores of each component and subsystem reported on. They also appeared very alert to financial aspects of the program.

c. CORONA Matters

(1) Recovery phase - Testing of hardware and techniques is proceeding substantially on schedule. The main difficulty to date has been construction of a parachute which can be made sturdy enough to withstand an air snatch, while staying within the weight limit of approximately 5 pounds. The ARA-21 transmitter which will be

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installed in the capsule, on initial test, proved better than expected. To test distances at which the signal from the transmitter could be received, the capsule was put in the ocean west of Point Mugu. Signals from the transmitter were picked up by a C-119 205 nm away. Signals were also picked up by a destroyer 59 nm away. Disappointing was the fact that the two six million candle power flashing lights could not be seen except at very close range. This was also the case with the aluminum dye. Further testing will, of course, be conducted on this equipment. A design change has been made which will incorporate a swivel between the capsule and the shrouds of the parachute to prevent possible shroud fouling in the event the despin rockets have not completely stopped rotation at the time of chute deployment. A complete dress rehearsal of all phases of the recovery operation will be conducted sometime prior to the number 3 launching (the first to be recovered). Jim Plummer informed me that it is probable that he will be able to get an X-17 which will fire a replica of the pod to an altitude of approximately 400,000 feet. This should give a realistic test to all phases of the recovery operation. It will not test re-entry, but it will have the actions which take place after chute deployment.

(2) Reports Control Manual - Drafts of operational control messages were coordinated with L/C Matheson and Jim Plummer to see if any were scheduled to be out of phase with the technical countdown. There was no conflict, therefore the drafts will be cleaned up and presented for approval prior to publication and distribution. This series of messages will be known as [REDACTED]. The messages between Project Headquarters and the Weather Central for the support of CORONA will still use the slug [REDACTED] with an appropriate suffix number.

(3) Weather support - The initial weather requirement for target areas has been laid on AWS. [REDACTED] Commander of AWS, has been briefed and gave the initial indication that he did not expect to have any difficulty in meeting this requirement. EMD has also laid on the requirement for launch and recovery weather in support of program IIA of WS 117-L. [REDACTED] and others from AWS are dealing directly with Col. Oder at EMD on this phase. As it is believed that we will want to have recovery area weather forecasts in our Operations Control Room, arrangements will be made with EMD and/or L/C Matheson to pass these on to us.

[REDACTED]
Lt Col USAF
Deputy Director Operations