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3 November 1964

TO: [REDACTED]  
FROM: [REDACTED]  
SUBJECT: SYSTEM CHECKOUT PROBLEMS AT VAFB

During the checkout and loading of the J-15 system at VAFB, several conditions were observed which are considered hazardous to either the condition of the system or to the validity of test operations. These conditions did weaken to some extent the validity of work on J-15. In general, these problems are not new, though the extent and significance has varied from time to time. Past efforts at correction have been minimized or rejected because of the uncertain future life of the program. At the present time, with an indicated 27 systems to be checked out over nearly two years, the adequacy of VAFB test operations must not be neglected.

The following five areas of problems were observed during the J-15 flight loading. All have been observed in previous systems and all can lead to failure to achieve test objectives.

1. Film Processing: Although new processing equipment along with detailed procedures for its use has been provided to the base, satisfactory results are not being achieved. Processing defects can prevent verification of payload condition as well as mask mechanical and electrical defects of the system.
2. Illumination During Payload Handling: The ambient illumination specified and used during payload handling is not sufficient to perform and inspect many operations. Use of the special flashlights in the present manner is not a satisfactory supplement.

Classified by the N R O

In Accordance with E. O. 12958

on NOV 26 1997

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- 3. Procedures: The reported discrepancy in J-15 payload threading illustrates the need for additional verifications and probably graphic illustrations for comparison. Verifications during payload handling are closely related to illumination problems mentioned above.
- 4. Handling Fixtures: The fixtures for mating the supply cassette are inefficient and dangerous to the hardware. Risks could be minimized by making dry runs in daylight, but poor alignment of the components remains a hazard. Arrangements for removing sensitometric samples as well as later payload handling are poor.
- 5. Personnel Familiarization: As checkout and loading operations become more routine, there appears to be a tendency to substitute personnel not fully familiar with the tasks to be performed. Dry runs and briefings may be helpful. A casual attitude toward the procedures must be avoided by all concerned.

[REDACTED]

Performance Evaluation

APPROVED:

[REDACTED]

Operations & Analysis

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]