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~~151~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.



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THE NRO STAFF

November 20, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. McLUCAS

SUBJECT: November 12 Meeting of the 303 Committee

Attached at the right are the minutes of the November 12, 1969 meeting of the 303 Committee. (Tab A)

We believe that these minutes highlight two significant problem areas concerning the roles and responsibilities for aircraft overflight of denied areas. First, we consider it inappropriate for the JRC to report on the results of the TAGBOARD test mission. TAGBOARD is an NRP asset, managed, tasked and funded by the NRO. SAC is an operating agency only, under JRC control. We believe that this reporting is clearly a usurpation of NRO authority and responsibilities with regard to TAGBOARD.

The second issue is also concerned with the roles and responsibilities for aircraft overflight. You will note that in paragraph 2d General Steakley advocated approval of the four additional 147T missions proposed for November. The discussion thereafter centered on the intelligence requirements and expectations from further drone missions.

It is evident from the previous 303 Committee meetings that the justification for the resumption of 147T flights was based on the fact that satellite missions were not obtaining the requisite photography of high priority targets. You will recall that on October 7, 1969 you forwarded a memorandum to Mr. Packard concerning requirements and the selection of resources for overflight of South China (Tab B).

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Mr. Packard responded by stating that the technical and operational considerations in selecting the appropriate asset would certainly be based on your advice (Tab C).

The minutes from the November 12 meeting indicate that Dr. Kissinger has requested Mr. Packard to furnish a paper on the intelligence requirements and expectations from further drone missions. We believe that such a paper should be prepared by the NRO, working with COMIREX, in consonance with Mr. Packard's previous comments and the NRO authority and responsibilities for all overflight of denied areas.

Conclusions:

1. The issue of NRO/JRC/OSA relationships with regard to aircraft overflight of denied areas must be clarified. We are preparing a memorandum to forward to you describing the background, status and recommended actions concerning aircraft overflight.

2. The study concerning requirements for overflight of South China should be performed by the NRO and COMIREX. Such a study would then address all national requirements, however generated, and all overflight systems, manned aircraft, drones and satellites.

Recommendation:

That you discuss the issue of South China requirements and overflight assets with Mr. Packard and request his concurrence with our proceeding with a joint NRO/COMIREX study.


JOHN R. MECEDA
Captain, USAF

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14 November 1969



MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Meeting of the 303 Committee,
12 November 1969

PRESENT: Mr. Kissinger, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Packard, Mr. Johnson,
and Mr. Helms

General Ralph D. Steakley and Mr. Wymberley DeR. Coerr
were present for Items 1 and 2.

1. Loss of TAGBOARD Drone

a. General Steakley briefed the Committee on the loss of the TAGBOARD drone on its first operational test mission which was launched against targets in South China. Thus far, analysis of the reason for loss indicates that TAGBOARD flew its programmed flight path, but a probable beacon failure as it approached the recovery area precluded retrieval of the camera package by the recovery aircraft. It is presumed to have descended to the automatic destruct altitude and destroyed itself over water.

b. Further analysis is proceeding to more firmly establish cause of loss and to take corrective measures where indicated. When this is completed a new proposal for a second operational test mission will be presented for consideration by the Committee.

c. Mr. Packard expressed some reservation over the use of the TAGBOARD capability for general collection purposes and commented that once its true operational capability is established, perhaps it should be held in reserve for certain high priority targets.

2. Discussion of October and November 1969 Drone Overflights

a. General Steakley briefed the Committee on the three 147T drone missions flown over South China during October. The first mission was nonproductive due to camera malfunction. The second obtained some photography and met some initial requirements. The third was shot down by the Chinese, but it is not certain whether by MIG-21 fighter aircraft or by a missile from a previously unknown SAM site.

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b. There was no known North Vietnamese reaction to the drone overflights of portions of their territory. The Chinese propagandized their shootdown of the 147T drone over radio and in the press, but this has thus far been ignored by the U.S. media.

c. General Steakley stated that if, in fact, the drone had been shot down by MIG-21 fighters this might indicate a capability of these aircraft to operate at a 68,000-70,000 foot altitude, a capability with which we do not now credit them. Questioning on this point by Mr. Mitchell elicited the fact that quite aside from photographic intelligence, further drone flights might serve to determine the MIG-21 operational altitude capability. This information is highly important in order to establish the survivability expectations of both drone and U-2 reconnaissance platforms.

d. General Steakley advocated approval of the four additional 147T drone missions proposed for November. He was supported by Messrs. Mitchell, Packard and Helms.

e. Mr. Johnson opposed further drone flights. He did not believe that the political and material costs were worth the intelligence to be expected. He pointed out that the U.S. is slowly attempting to better relations with Communist China and the drone overflights are provocative and tend to strengthen the position of the elements in Peking who are more hostile to the U.S. Mr. Johnson noted that he would generally support missions to obtain intelligence on high priority requirements, such as nuclear and missile developments, but was not convinced of the value of the intelligence anticipated from the 147T drone overflights.

f. Mr. Packard expressed a desire to see an up-to-date statement of U.S. policy toward Communist China. He stated that if the U.S. is going to make strong efforts toward bettering relations with the Communist Chinese then it might be well to review all intelligence collection activities including peripheral flights directed against the Chinese target.

g. The Chairman concluded the discussion with a request that Mr. Johnson prepare a paper reflecting the policy and political considerations supporting State Department objections to further 147T drone missions over South China. He also asked Mr. Packard to furnish a paper on the intelligence requirements and expectations from further drone missions. The Chairman stated he would present the opposing positions on additional drone overflights of South China to higher authority for resolution.

Frank M. Chapin
Frank M. Chapin

Distribution

Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Packard
Mr. Johnson

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

OCT 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. PACKARD

SUBJECT: Air Reconnaissance of South China

REFERENCE: Draft Memorandum for the President, subject as above,
from Henry A. Kissinger

The proposed memorandum to the President has been broadened since I commented on the previous draft to include not only the satisfaction of priority tactical intelligence targets, but also priority strategic intelligence targets.

Should the President authorize overflights to satisfy both tactical and strategic requirements without personally designating which collection platform is to be used, the memorandum now states that the 303 Committee will make the selection. I believe that the deficient intelligence requirements should be provided to the National Reconnaissance Office which can make an analysis of the available NRP resources to identify the best platform to satisfy the requirements. Recommendations would be made to the 303 Committee in accordance with the current procedures for authorizing overflights of denied territory. I recommend deletion of the option in the draft memorandum which implies direct selection of the collection platform by the 303 Committee, or modification of the option to agree with the current procedures.

I also recommend the following minor changes to the draft memorandum:

1. Page 1, paragraph 5: Change to read "...strongly desire to update in the areas of South China bordering North Vietnam, Laos, and Burma."

2. Page 2, second sentence: Delete from last line "if the operational test is successful."

John L. McLucas
John L. McLucas

Attachment

Memo, dtd Oct 9, 1969 (BYE-106,265-69B)

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

October 9, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR COLONEL ALLEN

SUBJECT: Air Reconnaissance of South China

Captain Wilson called me with reference to Dr. McLucas' memo of October 7 (attached) for Mr. Packard on the subject: Air Reconnaissance of South China.

Captain Wilson indicated that Mr. Packard had reviewed the memo and had some concern about the substantive recommendation (paragraph 2 of Dr. McLucas' letter) and had related to Captain Wilson his feelings: Mr. Packard understands Dr. McLucas' recommendation and agrees that the technical and operational considerations in selecting the appropriate asset would certainly be based on Dr. McLucas' advice. However, Mr. Packard points out that such advice is always sought by Mr. Packard and is usually provided by Dr. McLucas through his direct line (DNRO) responsibility to Mr. Packard. Mr. Packard is concerned that if he were to suggest a modification of the particular option as written, the 303 Committee might misunderstand the modified option and conclude that we are attempting to usurp its prerogatives, particularly since there are some peculiar political considerations involved in this decision. Mr. Packard feels that the Committee clearly understands the option as written and recognizes the Dr. McLucas/Mr. Packard role in such a decision. Further, Mr. Packard points out that he is in a position to insure that Dr. McLucas' advice in such a selection is sought since it would obviously be the basis for his position in the Committee deliberations. Accordingly, Mr. Packard prefers not to deal with the proposed modification of the option. He asked that we be sure to pass this word to Dr. McLucas.

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I did have an opportunity to explain to Captain Wilson that we had no intention of becoming involved in the political considerations and recognized that they were paramount in the decision on this particular item, but that we were simply trying to assure that, should a resumption of overflight be authorized, the DNRO's advice in the selection of the appropriate asset would be represented in any decision by the Committee or higher authority. As I understand Mr. Packard's comments, we have that assurance without a modification of the option.


WILLIAM R. YOST
Colonel, USAF

Copy to Colonel Sweeney