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WASHINGTON, D.C.



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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December 29, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: BOB Proposal for Study of GAMBIT III
Launch Schedule

The BOB proposal for a GAMBIT III launch schedule study, which I discussed (on the basis of a draft) with you and Mr. Fisher of the Bureau of the Budget on December 19, 1967, and which was sent in final form to the Secretary of Defense on December 21, 1967, prompts the following comments:

1) There is no need for additional study with respect to any NRO function i.e., the number of launches required to meet a given statement of intelligence requirements, or the costs, schedules and capabilities as related to alternative statements of requirements. I make this point because subsequent to our discussion of December 19, Mr. Fisher is reported by both Mr. John Bross of the CIA and Mr. Don Steininger of Dr. Hornig's office to have quoted me as stating that I had neither the time nor the staff to perform the necessary NRO studies related to GAMBIT launch vehicle schedules. You will recall that my statements related entirely to the analytical review of requirements for which I do not have the responsibility, nor correspondingly the time and staff.

2) The validation of requirements is currently a USIB responsibility. Under the charter of the NRO, we are bound to honor (within the limitations imposed by budget and EXCOM direction) USIB statements of requirements. However, we can and do exchange data with COMIREX and USIB on the NRO collection cost implications of alternative requirement statements.

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3) Since the GAMBIT III study proposed by the BOB, as I understood it, related primarily to the statement of requirements for high resolution satellite coverage, I pointed out that this is primarily a matter for the USIB and not for the NRO per se. I understand from John Bross that the BOB memorandum to the Secretary of Defense was not properly coordinated with Mr. Helm's office prior to its transmittal, although the copy sent to Mr. Helms by Mr. Schultze indicates the latter's belief that it was so coordinated.

4) The proposed study appears to be a one shot random effort to resolve the problem of requirements formulation. The question of GAMBIT launch schedules arose in the first place because Mr. Fisher was under the erroneous impression that in calculating launch schedules, the NRO did not take into account the GAMBIT vehicle improvements beyond vehicle No. 23, in spite of repeated explanations to the contrary in the month preceding the EXCOM budget meeting.

5) The recognition that there was a requirements definition problem with respect to high resolution satellite photography came over a year ago. The principal adversaries are CIA and DIA, with DIA heavily on the side of more coverage. The present schedule was arrived at as a compromise schedule by the USIB chairman, Mr. Helms, about a year ago. Subsequent studies have been under way to attempt to better define and validate these requirements. The latest results of these COMIREX and USIB deliberations were expected in December. However, this USIB action has now been delayed into mid-January.

6) I doubt very much that the proposed BOB study is a practical solution to the overall problem of requirements definition and validation. The target lists for intelligence collection, the degree of urgency attached to certain coverage, and such collection program factors as the degree of confidence in the HEXAGON first launch date will vary with time. It is impractical to expect that a one-time study of the kind proposed by the BOB will resolve the continuing problem.

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7) If there is a general feeling that more adequate analysis of requirements should be undertaken, it appears to me that there are two levels at which this could be done and probably the problem should be attacked at both levels. Within the DOD, intelligence collection requirements are processed through the DIA to the USIB. The DOD could inject at this stage some method of assigning not only a priority but a value to each major requirement. Second, at the USIB level a collation and integration of the requirements and related values submitted by the participating agencies could be undertaken.

8) At the present time, there is no group other than the EXCOM at which the senior managements of the DOD and the CIA (the principal USIB participants in both generation of requirements and intelligence collection) formally meet to review resource requirements resulting from intelligence collection requirements. This leads the BOB to inject requirements issues into the EXCOM which are not primarily the concern of the NRO, for whose management the EXCOM presumably exists.

In light of the above factors, I recommend that you (after consultation with Mr. Helms) reply to the BOB memorandum by indicating that requirement studies such as the one proposed are properly the function of the USIB as the senior coordinating and validating agency for intelligence collection requirements, and that the member agencies of USIB (including the DOD) have a similar unilateral responsibility for requirements submitted by them for USIB review and validation. As indicated in Mr. Schultze's letter, a review of the GAMBIT III launch requirement is currently in process by the USIB and certainly no action specifically with respect to GAMBIT requirements ought to be taken prior to completion of that review. More generally, the DOD plans to take action to establish improved methods of evaluating its intelligence collection requirements and relating them to the probable value. At the same time the DOD will work with the DCI to establish the necessary mechanisms for introducing such factors into COMIREX and USIB requirements reviews.

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Further, there has been in process between Dr. Flax and Mr. Helms, for several months now, planning for coordinating the schedules of USIB requirements reviews with NRO budget submittal and contract action dates so that timely information may be made available to all management levels concerned. The mechanism for this coordination has now been agreed on and will be in operation shortly.

Alexander H. Flax

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