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RECOMMENDATION 15:(c)

That, to enhance our photographic collection capability in the Chicom-Southeast Asia area, review be made to determine whether the present supply of U-2 aircraft is sufficient to meet anticipated needs.

The present national inventory of U-2 aircraft is twenty-four. Of these, four are assigned to the Air Force Systems Command for high altitude research and development activities and test support missions. Major modifications would be required to ready these aircraft for operational use. Of the twenty operational aircraft, nine are assigned to CIA. Each of these aircraft is powered by the J-75 engine, cruises above 70,000 feet, carries either of two high resolution cameras or an infra-red camera, and is equipped with defensive ECM equipments for protection against SA-2's and fighter interceptor X-band radar. Two of the aircraft are modified for carrier operations; several are equipped for aerial refueling. The remaining eleven U-2's are assigned to the Strategic Air Command. These aircraft are powered by the J-57 engine, cruise approximately 5,000 feet lower than the CIA type aircraft, carry the high resolution "B" camera, and are equipped with defensive ECM equipment. Two aircraft are configured for in-flight refueling. In October, 1965, approval was given to modify seven of the SAC aircraft to the U-2C configuration. Authority was provided to include a contract option for the remaining four aircraft. Thus, it is anticipated that all twenty U-2 aircraft will be of similar configuration.

On the basis of the past nine years of experience, the current world situation, and the expectations of world developments over the foreseeable future (two-to-three years), it is reasonable to expect continuing requirements for U-2 photographic reconnaissance under a number of different areas of the world. These requirements can be grouped into three general categories:

(a) Strategic covert reconnaissance of areas not heavily defended by surface-to-air missiles. Included in this category are certain areas of

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Communist China, the Sino-Indian border, Indonesia, the French Nuclear Test facility, the Congo, Algeria, Egypt, and Venezuela.

(b) Prompt coverage of crisis situations where defenses permit. Included in this category are situations previously experienced in areas such as Cyprus, India-Pakistan, and Cuba. Included in the crisis management program is the capability to monitor the course of developments on a frequent basis with rapid exploitation of the collected photographic intelligence.

(c) In support of tactical reconnaissance in situations such as Laos and North Vietnam where the U-2 can be used to get the basic photographic coverage, keep abreast of developments, and provide intelligence support supplementing reconnaissance conducted by friendly forces actually engaged in tactical operations.

Through long experience, the U-2 has proven to be an economical means to obtain high resolution photographic reconnaissance on a prompt basis. Because of the aircraft altitude and range performance capabilities, it can, in certain situations, permit sufficient flexibility in flight planning to accommodate U.S. political restraints while still achieving the objective. In addition, the range of the aircraft and the flexibility of the ground support system, make it possible to conduct orderly reconnaissance on relatively short notice and with a minimum of political difficulties.

The need for U-2 operations, however, must be evaluated as a part of the overall reconnaissance capability posture. Included in the family of reconnaissance vehicles are satellites, other aircraft, and drones. Both present and projected capabilities must be weighed in determining whether or not additional U-2's are required.

Satellite photography has proven to be extremely valuable. However, satellites have inherent limitations not encountered by aircraft. Specifically, satellites cannot alter course to avoid bad weather, lack rapid response time in meeting crisis situations, and are unable to get repetitive coverage of a specific area within a short time frame. It is extremely costly to obtain satellite coverage in a generally East-West direction.

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The U-2 and A-12 families of aircraft provide a complementary team making it possible to conduct reconnaissance by manned aircraft in wide range of situations. Specifically, the A-12 is designed to cover areas defended by surface-to-air missiles, and the U-2 can cover areas not defended by such missiles in situations where rapid deployment and repetitive coverage is important.

The drone systems presently available also complement the satellite and U-2 systems. The drones are not a substitute for the U-2 in that they have a more limited photographic capability, are more vulnerable than the U-2, and are less reliable than a manned system. The drones provide a most important capability for reconnaissance against heavily defended targets, are politically acceptable in some areas where manned aircraft are not, and can be used in decoy type of operations at relatively little expense.

Beyond the next two-to-three year time period, however, the need for the U-2 is less clear. The Advanced GAMBIT satellite (with ground resolution of approximately [redacted] will be launched in 1966 and should be fully operational in 1967. A new search/surveillance satellite should be operational in mid-1968. The TAGBOARD drone should be operational late 1966 or early 1967. A follow-on subsonic drone with increased performance and photographic capabilities may be available in mid-1968.

The need for U-2 aircraft in the anticipated reconnaissance capability environment beyond three years from now was considered in depth in mid-1965. The factors involved were reevaluated in November 1965. The conclusion, at that time, in light of the expected attrition rate (2.5 aircraft per year), the decision to update the SAC aircraft, the size of the CIA-SAC inventory and the lead time to procure new U-2's (12 to 14 months for a one/month production rate), was that the decision could and should be deferred until mid-1966. There is no new evidence which indicates that this decision should be changed.

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