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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

3 December 1964

The Honorable Cyrus R. Vance
Deputy Secretary of Defense
Washington, D. C.

Dear Cy:

Thank you for your letter of 19 November concerning the development of new reconnaissance systems. I agree with the necessity for a vigorous and searching review of all possibilities to develop new systems or improve existing systems to meet our intelligence requirements. Before proceeding with the establishment of a new board, however, I believe that we should have a clear understanding of the specific questions which require review.

The attachment to your letter suggests that the proposed steering group should examine and determine the information needs to be satisfied by satellite reconnaissance systems. USIB has already established the resolution and swath width of photographic coverage required for general search purposes and the resolution appropriate for "spotting" or "surveillance" purposes. USIB's conclusions in this regard are set forth in USIB-D-41.13/11, approved on 31 July 1964, which were communicated to the NRO. The information needs for satellite reconnaissance thus appear to me to have already been established with sufficient precision to guide our program for systems development and to require no further review at this time. The appropriate committee of USIB has already undertaken, as the result of a USIB decision of 30 October 1964, to formulate long-term intelligence requirements for satellite photographic collection.

The problem remains to determine what systems, as a practical matter, are best calculated to satisfy the informational needs which, as I say above, have already been established. On this point certain feasibility demonstration programs have already been approved by you and me and are under way. These include FULCRUM and GAMBIT 3, each of which has been examined by individuals with

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outstanding technical qualifications, thoroughly familiar with intelligence objectives, who concluded that we should proceed with feasibility studies on both systems. There is, I believe, reason for optimism that further research and testing will show that one or both of the systems under review will provide the practical answer to the requirement which it is designed to meet. When the feasibility studies are completed, we will of course require staff advice and may wish to empanel consultants to help us determine whether the systems meet specifications and should be put into development.

Although our informational needs appear to me to have been established and although work is already proceeding to determine the feasibility of specific systems to satisfy requirements for photography for general search or high resolution spotting purposes, there are doubtless other questions which should be examined. I note that the attachment to your letter includes reference to such questions as vulnerability, reliability, response time, on-orbit control, methods of recovery of data and processing. Moreover, circumstances such as the availability of new boosters or vehicles may suggest the desirability of changing the specifications which determined our earlier decisions with respect to systems feasibility studies. If proposals for alternative systems development are forthcoming, they clearly deserve consideration.

I have no objection to Dr. McMillan's suggestion that a steering group and a task force be established. I am agreeable to CIA participation and will arrange for the necessary personnel to be assigned to both organizations. In doing this I assume that the terms of reference for the task force will be modified to the extent necessary to avoid overlaps or duplications with the charters of existing USIB committees or, for that matter, USIB itself, and that the research and development work now under way on FULCRUM and GAMBIT 3 will be carried forward to the point agreed by the NRO Executive Committee without interruption or further delay.

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I am not familiar with the progress being made on GAMBIT 3 but have been advised orally by Dr. Wheelon that developments on FULCRUM are considered as favorable and that the evaluation of the work can be expected by about the first of March.

In agreeing to the establishment of the steering group and the task force I would like to reserve on the details of the "Operating Plan for Study of Search/Surveillance Satellite Reconnaissance" attached to your letter as the pressure of other matters has foreclosed my consideration of this paper which serves as terms of reference for the steering group and hence may have to be modified to meet the conditions mentioned above.

Sincerely,

(Signed) JOHN A. McCONE

John A. McCone
Director

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