

To L. Cross

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NRO APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DECLASSIFIED BY: C/IART
DECLASSIFIED ON: 10 JANUARY 2013

[REDACTED]
PASS BISON
PASS DITTO

[REDACTED] 0678

~~TOP SECRET~~ 211934Z SEP 79 CITE [REDACTED] 0085

PRIORITY BISON, DITTO.
HANDLE VIA BYEMAN CHANNELS ONLY
GAMBIT HEXAGON [REDACTED] OPS
BISON FOR GEN KULPAZ [REDACTED] L. MCCHRISTIAN [REDACTED]
DITTO FOR [REDACTED] FROM L. CRESS

SUBJ: GAMBIT DUAL MODE DEMONSTRATION

1. THE GAMBIT MISSION SCHEDULED FOR AUG 80 HAS GENERALLY BEEN RECOGNIZED AND ACCEPTED AS A SAFSP TEST FLIGHT REQUIREMENT TO VALIDATE THE DUAL MODE CAPABILITY. HOWEVER, CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE ORIGINAL DUAL MODE PLAN WAS CONCEIVED. AS A RESULT, I HAVE RECEIVED PRIVATELY EXPRESSED CONCERNS FROM WITHIN THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY REGARDING THE TEST EXPENDITURE OF ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING GAMBIT VEHICLES.
2. THE GAMBIT DUAL MODE PROGRAM WAS PRIMARILY INTENDED TO PROVIDE A FIVE-VEHICLE BACKUP IMAGERY SYSTEM TO [REDACTED] HEXAGON THRU 1985. HIGH RESOLUTION SHORTFALLS OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS LED TO THE 4350 MISSION AND IT IS LIKELY THAT HIGH RESOLUTION NEEDS (S&T, SALT II, ETC.) WILL REQUIRE FURTHER GAMBIT FLIGHTS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. GAMBIT DUAL MODE CAPABILITY COULD ALSO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH HEXAGON TO PROVIDE EXTENDED BROAD AREA SEARCH UNTIL AVAILABILITY OF A HEXAGON FOLLOW-ON SYSTEM. ALL OF THESE CONSIDERATIONS ILLUSTRATE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT POTENTIAL VALUE OF THE FOUR REMAINING GAMBIT VEHICLES. THE QUESTION THEN IS: HOW NECESSARY IS THE DUAL MODE DEMONSTRATION IN 1980 WHEN WEIGHED AGAINST THE 25% REDUCTION IN GAMBIT RESOURCES?
3. MY SUGGESTION IS THAT SAFSP REEVALUATE THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DUAL MODE DEMONSTRATION IN AUG 1980. IF THERE ARE HARD TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE TEST FLIGHT, IT SHOULD BE RESTATED FORMALLY TO SOLIDIFY THE MISSION SCHEDULE. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, REASONABLE TEST ALTERNATIVES ARE ACCEPTABLE, THEN SAFSP SHOULD RELINQUISH THE ORIGINAL SCHEDULE AND INFORM THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY THAT ALL FOUR REMAINING VEHICLES ARE AVAILABLE TO MEET INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENTS.
4. I BELIEVE THAT SAFSP SHOULD SEIZE THE INITIATIVE IN THE DUAL MODE DEMONSTRATION RECONSIDERATION. IF NOT, I FIRMLY EXPECT THAT EITHER SAFSS OR COMIREX WILL QUESTION THE SCHEDULED FLIGHT, ACCOMPANIED BY "HELP" IN DEVELOPING THE ANSWERS.