

NRO APPROVED FOR
RELEASE 17 September 2011

~~TOP SECRET~~
HEXAGON/CORONA/GA BIT

H/O SP Bootleg copy

Return to Nancy

*Def
file*



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN CHANNELS ONLY

20 December 1968

The Honorable Charles J. Zwick
Director, Bureau of the Budget
Executive Office of the President
Washington, D. C. 20505

Dear Mr. Zwick:

I have considered carefully your memorandum, BYE-11695-68, dated 26 November 1968, discussing the Fiscal Year 1970 HEXAGON budget. Further, I have discussed this matter at length with Dick Helms whose views coincide with the considerations and conclusions expressed herein. You will recall that HEXAGON was an agenda item at the 13 November 1968 NRP Executive Committee (EXCOM) meeting wherein we considered the Bureau of the Budget's proposal to cancel HEXAGON, but concluded unanimously that the Program should be continued.

There is a continuing concern that neither the Bureau's 26 November paper nor its earlier position as presented to EXCOM takes sufficient account of the intelligence needs for the HEXAGON system. As you know, the question of the value of the HEXAGON capability has been reviewed extensively in the past six months by the United States Intelligence Board (USIB), the National Intelligence Resources Board, and independently by the Department of Defense. These reviews concluded that the value of intelligence expected from HEXAGON well justifies the costs associated with it.

While the Budget Bureau's 26 November paper contains no recommendations, the essence of the Bureau's position seems to be as follows:

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN CHANNELS ONLY

BYE#7824-68

Copy No. 10

~~TOP SECRET~~
HEXAGON/CORONA/GAMBIT

CI A 7B 05039A - 5-100

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN CHANNELS ONLY

a. The current USIB requirements for satellite photography requirements are being adequately met by the GAMBIT-III and CORONA systems.

b. The only unique additional contribution that the HEXAGON system will make is in the area of ground forces.

Your memorandum raises the question as to whether the incremental additional contribution in the ground forces area is worth the additional costs as identified in the memorandum.

The Bureau's position on the intelligence contribution of the HEXAGON system is based on at least two misconceptions. First, although the current CORONA and GAMBIT-III systems do in general come close to meeting the USIB requirements set for those systems, this is so only because the USIB requirements referred to are tailored to the capabilities and limitations of those systems and thus do not represent a general statement of information needs. For example, in its 1 July 1963 "Assessment of the Intelligence Gain Provided by KH-9 over KH-4 and KH-3" (BYE-2265-68/1) COMREX stated: "It is particularly important to emphasize that our current requirements have been developed on the basis of current capabilities and those problems within the range of these capabilities." It is not the general practice of USIB to generate detailed collection requirements for a system which that system cannot satisfy.

The second point of particular note is that the ground forces problem is only one of several major areas in which the HEXAGON system will make substantial additional contributions. The Bureau has somehow gotten the impression that the issue in this instance is limited solely to ground forces and solely to current requirements. The Intelligence Community and Department of Defense studies additionally place special emphasis on emerging problems foreseeable in the 1970's--an aspect generally overlooked in the Bureau paper.

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN CHANNELS ONLY

2

~~TOP SECRET~~
HEXAGON/CORONA/GAMBIT

~~TOP SECRET~~

HEXAGON/CORONA/GAMBY

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN CHANNELS ONLY

The HEXAGON system will make major contributions in at least four areas of high importance to the intelligence process, specifically:

- a. It will provide the large area search coverage with a substantial image quality improvement over the present coverage capability in that regard.
- b. It will provide the unique capability to discriminate between mobile forces of various types, categories and classes.
- c. Because of its capability to cover large areas in high resolution imagery, the HEXAGON system will provide a time frame reference that will very materially assist in eliminating uncertainties arising out of time and distance factors as applied to mobile targets.
- d. The HEXAGON system will represent a cogent source for verification of Soviet adherence to any future disarmament agreement owing to its capability to provide a solid base for establishing norms and to detect departures therefrom.

In summary, I do not believe the Bureau's memorandum on this subject takes into account many of the factors which compel me to regard HEXAGON as an intelligence tool of very high potential and one for which I perceive no substitute in the offing.

Sincerely,

/s/ Rufus Taylor

Rufus Taylor
Vice Admiral, U. S. Navy
Acting Director

cc: Deputy Secretary of Defense
Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology
Director, National Reconnaissance Office

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN CHANNELS ONLY

3

~~TOP SECRET~~

HEXAGON/CORONA/GAMBY

~~TOP SECRET~~
HEXAGON CORONA GAMBIT

Signature Recommended:


Deputy Director for Science and Technology

19 DEC 1968
Date

- Cys 1 & 2 - Director, BOB
- 3 - DepSecDef
- 4 - Sp. Asst. to Pres. for S&T
- 5 - D/NRO
- 6 - ADCI
- 7 - Exec. Reg.
- 8 - DD/S&T
- 9 - DD/S&T Registry
- 10 - D/OSP
- 11 - C/D&AD
- 12 - RE/OSP

DD/S&T/OSP/LCDirks/JJCrowley/bg/7905 (19 December 1968)

Rewritten:DDCI/as (20 Dec 68)

DEC 50 1 29 111 300

HEXAGON CORONA GAMBIT

~~TOP SECRET~~

BYE-7824-68
Page Four

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY