

~~SECRET~~

5 August 1971

NOTE FOR: Dr. McLucas

John:

Mr. Helms has now gone over the papers that I left with you yesterday and I enclose a revision of one of them which incorporates a change that he made. In the recommendation that would go along with a memorandum that incorporates Option 2, he has added the second to the last paragraph.

As I mentioned to you yesterday we would propose to have either of these recommendations follow immediately after your description of the options but omitting the last sentence in Option 1, and all after the word "availability" in the third line of page 9 of your draft. As I also mentioned, he is assuming that we would go back to the original drafts that he and Mr. Packard had exchanged comments on for the main body of the discussion leading up to the option description. Although I did not discuss this with Mr. Helms, I do not think there would be any problem if we preceded that original draft with your introductory paragraph and "background" discussion.



Donald H. Steininger

BYE 6471-71

WORKING COPYHANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY~~SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

If it is necessary to keep Option 2 in the memorandum, Mr. Helms would like to associate himself with words like this:

Recommendation:

The NRP Executive Committee agrees that the US should move toward acquiring the EOI system at some level of funding. EOI is in fact the intelligence system of the future. It has almost open-ended possibilities for growth both in image quality and in image processing. Thus the Committee recommends Option 1 - build EOI only for operation in 1976. This would develop the best capability current technology can offer on a reasonable schedule while relying on our presently operating satellites in the meantime.

The Committee does not know how much importance you attach to getting a quick response, crisis reconnaissance capability earlier than Option 1 could make it available. Indeed, we have been unable to find a very satisfactory way to get an earlier capability. Option 2 would give you the FROG in 1974, one or two years earlier than Option 1 can supply EOI. Mr. Helms and _____, however, believe that this plan has the same budgetary problems that have already convinced us that we cannot build both EOI and FROG concurrently. Under this option, we would have to make a decision in 1973 to start EOI development. At that time, because of the operational costs of the FROG program, the budget levels facing us in the subsequent years would be about as high as those which are now causing us to recommend against building both EOI and FROG today. If these levels seem prohibitively high now, it is likely that they will seem equally so in 1973. Even if we were able to hold to this decision in spite of the high budgets, and launch into the EOI development in 1973, over the five years between FY 72 and 77 the total FROG-EOI program would cost _____ more than an EOI only program (Option 1). Through 1980 it would cost _____ more and it would delay the time when we could phase out GAMBIT and realize additional savings.

For these reasons, Mr. Helms and _____ believe that a selection of Option 2 would in effect be a decision to defer the EOI program indefinitely. They (he) therefore recommend against Option 2, preferring to continue to rely on the capabilities of GAMBIT and HEXAGON in 1974 and 1975 than to give up the greater capability of EOI.

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

There are some interim systems much less expensive than FROG which we could probably handle concurrently with Option 1 if you gave such a plan your endorsement. But these systems have limited target coverage capability and poor resolution (poorer than 3-5 feet) and we do not think they would satisfy the full range of our needs for crisis reconnaissance. They would, however, have some utility and Mr. Helms and would prefer to build one of these in conjunction with Option 1 than to proceed along the course of Option 2.

On balance, however, they (he) feel that they (he) are unable to recommend any other course than to go ahead with EOI in an expeditious way.

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY

2

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Mr. Helms would prefer to omit Option 2 and to conclude the report with a recommendation along the following lines:

RECOMMENDATION

The NRP Executive Committee agrees that the US should move toward acquiring the EOI system at some level of funding. EOI is in fact the intelligence system of the future. It has almost open-ended possibilities for growth both in image quality and in image processing. Thus the Committee would like to proceed with an orderly development to get EOI operating in 1976 or earlier, if possible. This would develop the best capability current technology can offer on a reasonable schedule while relying on our presently operating satellites in the meantime. We request your concurrence in this plan.

The Committee does not know how much importance you attach to getting a quick response, crisis reconnaissance capability earlier than EOI could make it available. Indeed, we have been unable to find a very satisfactory way to get an earlier capability. Next to EOI, FROG is the most capable possibility for crisis reconnaissance but it is so costly that we do not think we can have both FROG and EOI. Indeed, we think this course would seriously jeopardize our ability to undertake some other very important collection programs.

There are some interim systems much less expensive than FROG which we probably could handle concurrently with EOI if you gave such a plan your endorsement. These systems, however, have such limited target coverage capability and such poor resolution that we do not think they would satisfy our needs for crisis reconnaissance.

In sum, the disadvantages associated with any plan to get an interim crisis capability are so great that we would prefer to rely on GAMBIT and HEXAGON until EOI can be put into operation. They are less able than we would like for crisis reconnaissance but can do a much better job than we were able to do last summer over the Mid East. Thus we cannot recommend any other course than to go ahead with EOI in an expeditious way.

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~