

DRAFT/JLMcLucas/11 August 1971

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Readout Satellites

WORKING PAPERS



The Executive Committee (ExCom) which supervises our National Reconnaissance Program (NRP) . . . been examining the question of how best to achieve a readout capability which would provide daily return of photographic coverage from space.

The Executive Committee agrees upon developing the Electro-Optical Imaging System (EOI) as the most capable and most useful such system. EOI would be ready by about 1976. There is disagreement in the Committee (consisting of Dave Packard, chairman; Dick Helms, and Ed David) as to how best to achieve an interim capability, if one is needed.

The purpose of this memorandum is to ask your guidance concerning the need for an interim capability.

Last April, in response to certain users--particularly the State Department--we decided to develop EOI for 1976 available and another system, called FROG, for interim capability. . . before making that decision we had had a letter from George S. Lutz which implied a desire on your part for an interim

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capability (within your term of office). Because the course we decided to follow is an expensive one, we are soliciting further expression of interest on your part. If you are satisfied with having EOI by 1976, then there is no need to develop an alternative approach. But if you want an earlier system capability, then I do not believe you can have it without adding another system before the EOI (which we all want to develop). The best available such system is what we call FROG.

I believe, and Dave Packard shares this view, that it is not reasonable to expect that EOI can be ready before 1976. It is just too new and too complex a system to assume that there will not be development problems with consequent delays in schedule.

However, because of its technical merits, we believe that the ExCom's Option 1 (develop EOI beginning January 1972 with capability in ^{January} 1976) is the proper choice for the ultimate system.

Disagreement exists within the Executive Committee about what to do to achieve an earlier-than-1976 interim capability, if you feel we should have it. Dave Packard and Ed David believe that the only worthwhile way to achieve such a capability is to develop FROG, and to offset its costs in the early year by delaying EOI two years. Dick Helms believes that if you want an earlier

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capability, the best way is to accelerate EOI development work, adding about to its cost, and achieving IOC about one year earlier. A less desirable option, in Dick's opinion, is to fall back to one of the less capable interim systems that we discarded earlier because of their lesser capabilities.

Another course, which in view of the disagreement may have some merit, would be to accept Option 1, providing EOI in 1976, and to spend more time examining other alternatives for an interim system. We could over the next month or two re-examine the cheaper interim systems which were discarded earlier and see if any of them look more attractive now.

Since this is such a complex problem, and since there are two quite different viewpoints held within the ExCom, I think you should have the opportunity to consider all the pertinent facts. Accordingly, I am attaching two separate memoranda expressing the divergent viewpoints, one from Dave Packard and Ed David, the other from Dick Helms.

(Melvin R. Laird)

Attachments