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THE NRO STAFF

7 October 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. WADE, OSD(ISA)

SUBJECT: DOD/NASA Interface

A few days ago, you asked me to provide you a memorandum which would associate the activities of the interagency Space Policy Committee and the technically oriented Program Review Board.

The NSC Space Policy Committee is supposed to provide overall national space policy recommendation for the compatible operation of the so-called military and civil oriented space programs.

As we had suspected, the State Department, internally, has a lot to learn in order to facilitate wise policy judgments. Thus far, there have been two meetings of the Space Policy Working Group. We understand that Jim Goodby will be replaced as Chairman by Leon Sloss. Goodby started out by attempting to bring in too wide a scope for the first study. At this point, it appears that OMB will not press to make the initial study a cost oriented one. We had support from Dave Elliott in moderating that aspect.

As is usual, the "fact of" appears to be emerging as a significant issue in terms of driving future civilian oriented earth observation programs. Were the "fact of" declassified and the reconnaissance product declassified, there would be a lesser need for parallel dedicated civilian programs. NASA perceives this threat and has enlisted the help of NOAA, of the Commerce Department, to "balance" the working group. We, in turn, are encouraging ACDA to participate directly, since ACDA is hawkish about unconstrained civil programs.

It is clear that the issues will need to be sharpened since there will be so many subjects addressed in the first draft. The draft should be out in a week or so and it remains to be seen whether or not State will attempt to synthesize the inputs and isolate the issues to make a cohesive strawman paper.

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Thus far, there has been reasonable accord between your office, JCS and ourselves and also with CIA on the first input. DIA was difficult to work with for some unexplained reason and JCS was forced to submit additional comments rather than confronting DIA.

The Space Policy Committee will find it extremely difficult to work through the paper, mainly because of the myriad of issues involved and also because Secretary Sisco has indicated that the first paper should have options for Presidential decision. What these options will be, remains to be seen.

The Program Review Board mechanism is supposed to provide a reasonable management of technology and data between the classified programs and the openly conducted civil programs. On the positive side, the mechanism is drawing together the knowledgeable players from the Pentagon. NASA is supremely well organized to cope with the mechanism mainly because they perceive that the burden of the situation is on them institutionally and they know that if the Program Review Board goes against their judgment then an appeal can be made to the Space Policy Committee. The Space Policy Committee may not be adept at addressing technically sophisticated problems which will, of course be to NASA's advantage.

The major advantage of the Program Review Board mechanism is that NASA will be less likely to surprise the Pentagon with a last minute announcement on their programs. If there are, indeed, any problems for the Pentagon, there should be sufficient time for the mechanism to function. I think that the first meeting of the Program Review Board, which you attended, was indication of the style of the Board we will see during the next few months, or years, if it is successful. The Committees are now active on the various action items generated during the first meeting on SEASAT and LST.

In summary, there needs to be a good interface between the politically oriented Space Policy Committee and the technically oriented Program Review Board. The Policy Committee should be able to set a broad framework of philosophy such as in the data management area for the technical people to work with in adjudicating problems and the Board should keep NASA honest and working more above board than has been the tradition.

[REDACTED]
Lt Colonel, USAF
Deputy Director for
Plans and Policy

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