

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM

C O P Y

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This was drafted before today's news
about Raborn. It may however be relevant.

s/ Brock

C O P Y

(Handcarried to Mr. Vance's office by
Major Skantze, 12 April, 1600 hours)

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

April 12, 1965

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I feel very strongly that responsibility for the Satellite Operations Center is an essential element of any properly constituted management structure for the NRP. I am not sure that I expressed the arguments well during our recent discussion. I would note in passing that the CIA clearly recognizes the essentiality of the Op Center - they made an issue of it in 1963 and are doing so again.

The NRP, as defined, is a single program embracing operations and R&D. The NRO was established to manage it - to maximize the "take" from operations pressed by urgency and faced by severe limitations, and to improve the operations and overcome limitations by making best use of R&D resources.

The President's Board, in its report of last May, in effect stated the two premises: that the underlying problems still exist, and that they merit extraordinary attention. The Board concluded that a single NRP under central management is still a valid and necessary approach to a solution. Secretary McNamara has accepted the recommendations of that report. The CIA has not, but is fairly well on record as accepting the premises.

With agreement on the premises, the main issue is the substance of the solution to the problems described in the premises. I don't believe that the administrative issue can be completely ignored, however. The President's Board is on record favoring a strong centralized management, and an evident departure from this standard will evoke a reaction. To my mind, the same arguments apply to both issues - which is to say that

the President's Board is right, and that a departure from good management practice does indeed weaken one's approach to the basic problems. The arguments as they relate to the Operations Center can be expressed by talking in terms of satellite photographic intelligence.

The basic concept of the NRO is that one office - or one individual, the DNRO - is responsible for delivering pictures to the intelligence community, with related identifying data, pictures of targets and areas as specified to him, having a timeliness and quality that is limited only by natural causes, by pre-given policies and priorities, and by budgetary constraints that have been agreed upon.

One can certainly ask, whether this is a valid or useful separation of responsibilities. Mr. McCone's words do not accurately distinguish among responsibilities, functions, and resources, but it is clear from his chart that he does not choose to separate out the specific responsibility just identified. Presumably he subsumes it under his own statutory responsibility for delivering estimates. It might be interesting for the DoD to press for a clarification of this point, since in fact the military community uses pictures directly, and the related data, for detailed measurement, targetting, and identifying. The delivery to the military of primary data for these purposes appears to me to be a function quite distinct from that of delivering estimates. Does CIA recognize this function? If so, how does Mr. McCone plan to insure its proper accomplishment?

From the point of view of management, the particular separation of responsibilities which the NRO represents is a valid one. On the output side, the interface is very clear: the product is a definite thing, pictures and closely related data, having qualities and properties that are relatively easy to judge against standards that can be objective and fairly complete. In other words, performance can be defined and evaluated.

The input side is somewhat more complex, but in drawing an interface at the level of targetting requirements and priorities, one is nevertheless simply making explicit a necessary function. The response, in terms of orbit selections and camera decisions, to requirements and priorities will inevitably be made by people who did not themselves wholly establish these requirements and priorities. If the operation works at all, then, the only variables are the timeliness with which orbit selections and camera decisions can reflect changes in requirements or priorities, and their sensitivity to subtle distinctions in priorities. [As we discussed, there is no real obstacle, under a separation of responsibilities, to achieving the best in timeliness and sensitivity that is possible under any arrangement.]

I cannot see any

The separation of responsibilities which the NRO represents is also a valuable one. It fixes attention on a definite final product, pictures and related data, a product which is itself a desideratum, because it is used by many people and for many purposes. As noted, the product is capable of fairly objective evaluation against standards, and indeed against standards that are reasonably appropriate to its final uses. By establishing this product as a specific responsibility, one sets up the best mechanism we fallible people know for getting good results - incentive.

[Please notice that] ^I it is infinitely easier to evaluate pictures than to evaluate estimates. It is certainly good management, even of the estimating process, to ask for good performance of that part of the process that can be broken out and evaluated, provided that the standards of evaluation are appropriate to the ^{desired} end result. In the present case, they are ^{easy} ^{enough}.

Granting, now, that the NRO has been assigned the specific responsibility to deliver pictures in response to requirements, why should the Satellite Operations Center be an integral part of the organization? Indeed, with little change, the argument just cited for separating out the NRO can also be read as favoring

a separation of the Op Center function within the NRO. This is not of course what Mr. McCone has proposed, since his charts reject the whole concept of the NRO, but one could certainly consider a situation in which the physical resources - the rooms, desks, and most importantly the communications outlets, - are located at Langley, the Center is manned by CIA employees, and these resources are "tabbed" by the NRO.

Against this arrangement, there are important arguments of substance. The arguments relate to the efficient use of resources, or alternatively, to the complexity, in fact, of the interface between the Op Center and the other functional elements of the NRO. In performing its primary function of preparing and executing mission plans, the Op Center, acting under authority delegated from the DNRD, imposes tasks on other specialized and expert elements of the NRO, tasks which result in data being returned and hardware being committed. Although in principle perhaps irrelevant, it is a fact that most of these tasks go to Air Force elements of the NRO. Almost all of the tasks result in the expenditure of NRO money. Most of the tasks go to elements of the NRO which have important functions other than direct support of the Op Center. The actions of the Op Center therefore mesh quite closely with, and can indeed interfere with, other direct operating business of the NRO. These actions in fact merit and do get continuing attention from the Director, NRO Staff and from me.

There is a considerable reservoir of expertise in the Op Center, deriving from its recorded and remembered experience. We draw heavily and regularly upon this reservoir in support of long term operational planning and planning of research and development. (I have not in this essay attempted to address the R&D responsibilities of the NRO.) Formalized studies by the Op Center are an important part of our planning activity, but we also regularly use the Op Center personnel directly in other activities of study and consultation. I will return to this point later. It is perhaps the most important.

I believe that it is not practicable so to codify the present functions of the Op Center that they can be separated out as a distinct set of responsibilities assignable to a fully separate management unit. In principle, one could perhaps enlarge the Op Center and make it more nearly self-contained, simplifying its interfaces with the rest of the NRO to those, in the limit, of receiving requirements and issuing direct operational instructions. This would require a duplication of resources and expertise. Such duplication is certainly not efficient, and probably not possible, since it is difficult to duplicate effectively all of the expertise, derived from direct experience, upon which the Op Center draws by its present tasking.

Thus endeth the logical arguments favoring retention of the Op Center. To my mind they are in fact compelling, but there are non-logical arguments, variants of the argumentum ad hominem, which are of equal or greater force. If the Op Center is to work as intimately as it does with the rest of the organization, physical separation from us and from the NRO staff would be a nuisance. Organizational separation would be more than a nuisance. In fact, I am sure that, in the present climate, physical and organizational removal of the Op Center would largely destroy the intimacy and effectiveness of our present relationships. The NRO would be deprived of an important asset to its planning of research and development, to the benefit of "private" interests elsewhere. Compare, for example, the penetration of our studies of new general search requirements (sic) with the planning base on which ~~the NRO~~ rests. Much of the difference, in my judgment, results from our collective understanding of operations and from the fact that we have direct channels by which to draw upon that understanding.

Much of the remaining difference, by the way, results from the fact that we are responsible, responsible for the R&D and for living with its results. This, and the access to expertise just referred to, constitute two of the three primary arguments for assigning R&D responsibilities to the NRO. This assignment is a matter not otherwise addressed here.

Recall the difficulties General Carroll has had to get military collection requirements really recognized by USIB and acted on by the NRO. Reflect on the perjury committed in our presence the other day favoring requirements for ~~██████████~~. If the requirements channel from the Chairman, USIB, to satellite operations is never formalized, but remains as private and as covert as that between him and IDEALIST, the whole of the collection process will be perverted to serve one narrow set of ends. The usefulness of satellite photography to the military will become largely incidental.

I am convinced that if the Op Center is removed from the NRO, the NRO will be destroyed and the DoD will experience interminable difficulties in getting its requirements recognized. I am further convinced that this fundamental fact is well understood by others and that final irrevocable destruction of the NRO is the primary intent behind the proposal to separate the Op Center.

Brockway McMillan