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THE NRO STAFF

October 17, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. FLAX

SUBJECT: Response to Acting Secretary Baird's Letter to Mr. Nitze

Following my discussion with you on Tuesday, I prepared the attached draft response (Tab A) to Secretary Baird's letter (Tab B).

I have coordinated the response with Mr. Palley and have discussed its content with Colonel Morrison from Mr. Horwitz' office. Colonel Morrison is, as I mentioned, the OSD action officer on the Navy letter. Mr. Palley concurs in the response and Colonel Morrison is prepared to use the draft in the preparation of a response for Mr. Nitze's signature. Colonel Morrison will add to the draft any particular discussion related to the general Navy roles and missions questions posed in Secretary Baird's letter.

If you have no objection, I will release the draft to Colonel Morrison for his use.


RUSSELL A. BERG
Brigadier General, USAF

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

8 8 AUG 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL HEDRICK, AFRDS

SUBJECT: Advanced Configuration Reusable Spacecraft Study

This responds to your Secret memorandum, same subject, dated August 7, 1968.

There are no active studies underway in the NRO which relate to mission requirements for reusable spacecraft. In the past there have been a few cursory examinations, usually in response to unsolicited contractor proposals. None of these seems to have been well enough documented to be of value to your study.

We would be remiss, however, if we did not point out that each of the examinations, and our current view, provides us with a negative outlook on the potential of reusable spacecraft for the mission of the National Reconnaissance Program. Development trends are strongly toward longer-lived systems, with much lower launch rates. These lower launch rates cause the period of amortization of development costs to be unattractively long for even the most optimistic reusable concepts we have seen. In the future we believe it will be practical to develop a readout photo satellite which will provide responsiveness and economy through long life.

Reconnaissance in the event of Soviet interference during cold war periods presents particular problems.

Hot war or post-attack reconnaissance has never been an NRO mission. These considerations have muted our interest in reusable, maneuvering concepts (such as the now defunct ISINGLASS).

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384-68
PAGE 1 OF 2 PAGES

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Our experience with space studies of the kind you propose shows that the SAMSO plans staff and its contractors, unless restricted in advance, will make excursions into the area of earth-sensing image-forming satellites. This is in spite of the fact that key SAMSO officials are fully informed of the restrictions applied to such studies by the Secretary of Defense. The lack of self-imposed discipline leads to complex security problems, which usually come to our notice after a study has been completed, printed, and distributed.

We request and will appreciate your assistance in making study plans available to us at their inception, as in this case. In addition, the following arrangement should be put into effect on this and subsequent studies:

1. The SAMSO plans staff should be notified that by direction of the OSD it will not engage in studies of earth-sensing image-forming satellites without the personal approval of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Research and Development.
2. Contractor work statements for studies will be coordinated with SAFSP prior to being issued.
3. The first draft of contractor and SAMSO study reports will be coordinated with SAFSP prior to being published or issued.

I assure you that our SAFSS and SAFSP reviews will be conducted promptly and will be limited to a security policy analysis. I am confident that by following these simple steps we will eliminate much, and perhaps all, of the difficulty we are now having in this area.


RUSSELL A. BERG
Brigadier General, USAF
Director

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 384-6
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