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AIR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
Andrew Air Force Base
Washington 25, D. C.

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19 September 1960

REF TO
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SUBJECT

SANOS Program

NO REDACTIONS. CP

General Thomas D. White
Chief of Staff
Headquarters USAF
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear General

I appreciate your prompt action in designating General Greer as "Mr. SANOS" and in establishing top priority for the assignment of his needed assistance as summarized in your CONFIDENTIAL - EYES ONLY memorandum of 4 August 1960. General Greer is now operating as Vice Commander, AFIRD, for Space Security Satellites, requests for proposals have gone out and we have briefed the contractors relative to the requirements of the R-6 Program; and the recent successes in returning orbiting payloads to earth, all add to our confidence in the success of the over-all program.

However, for your consideration, I want to give you a few more thoughts on the proposal to establish a Science Advisory Committee to serve in a role for SANOS similar to the Von Neumann Committee on ballistic missiles. My idea is to create a buffer from the criticism which we expect from civilian committees such as the ones headed by Dr. Kilian and Dr. Bauer, because it is so difficult and time consuming for key Air Force personnel to counter the criticisms of such committees. In this connection we can expect the unfortunate defection of NSA personnel to give impetus to investigations and reviews of intelligence and intelligence systems. This lends further weight to the idea of establishing the proposed committee. I believe a Science Advisory Committee composed of members compatible to the several interested agencies would function as a buffer, would facilitate solution of some of the technical and vested interest problems with which we are confronted and, perhaps, most important, would demonstrate Air Force initiative in developing SANOS to serve the variety of national purposes of which it is capable. This could help to counter, in the incipient stages, any charges that the Air Force is attempting to hold SANOS to serve its own parochial purposes. This latter consideration could be very important and could negate the requirement to reaffirm ARDC's charter for the conduct of the program.

We should also concern ourselves with the world-wide impact of the forthcoming launching of the first R&D SANOS satellite now scheduled for

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4 October. This falls within the time span of the next United Nations' Assembly Meeting which commences on or about 20 September. We can expect the Russians to launch another propaganda attack during this meeting, which will be designed to further inhibit U. S. intelligence efforts, especially reconnaissance activities. This attack, together with pressures which may originate within the framework of our own Government or from public opinion must not be permitted to delay or interfere with the scheduled launching for the following reasons:

1. The loss of the Cometix, the U-2 and the recent B-47 incident have re-emphasized the urgency of a successful and timely achievement of photographic and electronic reconnaissance of the Soviet Union and other denied areas.

2. A successful SAMOS launch shortly after convening of the U. N. General Assembly (26 September 1960), would provide the U. S. and other Western powers with a propaganda victory and strengthen the position of the West at this meeting.

3. The Communist position, on the other hand, might be weakened by such a development and could result in a more conciliatory Soviet attitude. This could conceivably serve to lessen the existing East-West tensions.

4. A successful SAMOS launching could be portrayed as a scientific development which could serve the purposes of furthering disarmament by demonstrating an inspection and monitoring capability for certain specific arms control proposals.

5. In like manner, the SAMOS could be portrayed as an effective contribution toward an open world and thereby further serve to reduce existing tensions.

6. One of the Soviet lines of attack at the U. N. probably will be to continue to play the U-2 theme. A successful launch of SAMOS could confirm that such flights (U-2) would be unnecessary in the future and could deflate the Soviet bombast.

7. The SAMOS launching should be considered as a normal, routine development in our research and development program. Any decision to delay the launching would require a subsequent positive decision as to when the appropriate time might exist to re-establish a launch date. Such a subsequent decision might be hard to obtain inasmuch as a judgment would be required as to the "right" time. Conceivably, a continuing slippage could occur in arriving at such a positive decision and we could find ourselves in a situation similar to that existing in the test cessation negotiations where we have for a prolonged period of time been unable to test nuclear weapons.

8. There is a good possibility that the Soviets may not choose to react immediately to a U. S. reconnaissance satellite. This has been evidenced in the past by the fact that the Soviets have made no formal protest about TIROS (NIE 100-6-40). The Soviets might deliberately adopt such a position in order not to give further recognition to such a U. S. achievement.

9. We should continue to assess all alternatives for carrying out the program. SAMS should be launched in a manner which minimizes the possibility of possible adverse criticism or charges of Soviet countermeasures. Every effort should be made to determine the program's schedule. Only when there is a clear and unmistakable indication that the timing of a proposed launching (or significant event) would bring about adverse effects should consideration be given to accepting a self-imposed delay.

At the same time we should strengthen and revise the currently proposed Information Plan for SAMS. In the absence of a clear line of guidance from the Government, the press is very likely to respond to a SAMS shot with highly speculative accounts, emphasizing the "Spy in the Sky" theme. This kind of publicity could provoke a strong Soviet reaction which, against the background of disarmament discussions in the U. N., might intimidate some Government quarters to the point of impairing the SAMS program. The preferred public rationale for SAMS which would be consistent with JCS policy considerations, should include the following:

1. The initial SAMS shot is the continuation of a series of R&D launchings which would advance the state-of-the-art in the field of observation satellites beyond that which was demonstrated to the world by TIROS, the cloud photographic launching of April 1960.

2. Research and development progress expected to result from the initial and subsequent SAMS launchings would provide a significant technical tool to help maintain the security posture of the United States and its Free World partners, in the absence of adequate international arms control agreements.

3. In the event agreement can be reached on arms control arrangements, SAMS development will represent an equally significant inspection technique contributing to greater security for all mankind. SAMS results, for example, would logically supplement any inspection system to safeguard against surprise attack and in this connection, the United States would look forward to working out arrangements for making available such results (or photographic data) to a suitable international disarmament organization or similar body when it is established on an agreed and effective basis.

4. As a by-product of the primary contributions which the SAMS development is expected to make ultimately to the security of all nations, other benefits will accrue in such fields as meteorology, geology, forestry, flood and erosion control, natural resources inventory, etc.

A public line which makes the above points should be adopted by Government spokesmen preferably in advance of the first SAMS launching in order to avoid the "Spy in the Sky" theme which may otherwise be adopted and which tends to support the Soviet propaganda theme of "aggressive U. S. reconnaissance activities".

Should disagreement be on the agenda of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and also the President on a matter of U. S. policy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff should avoid involving reconnaissance activities in such a manner as to lead to the impression that such a program is being developed.

1. Avoids recommending to this time that the U. S. place the capability of a reconnaissance satellite such as SAGE in the disposition of an international control organization since this action could result in undesirable interference in the development and operation of an essential U. S. intelligence gathering system.

2. Proposes that the U. S. would make available appropriate results from the SAGE program. Such a proposal would receive international acceptance of the current reconnaissance development program as well as further undermine the Soviet propaganda offensive against reconnaissance.

It is recommended that you urge the Secretary to obtain assurances from the Department of Defense and the Executive Department of compatibility of views as expressed in Paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 above.

Sincerely

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~~EYES ONLY~~

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