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MAY 28 1956

SUBJECT: RAND Recommendation on WS 117L Program

TO: Commander  
Air Research and Development Command  
ATTN: RDGB  
P.O. Box 1395  
Baltimore 3, Maryland

1. USAF letter, Subject: RAND Recommendation on WS 117L Program of 4 May 1956 with Air Research and Development Command 1st Indorsement of 11 May 1956 has been forwarded to this Activity requesting Western Development Division findings relative to the recent RAND proposal for establishing an early WS 117L capability.

2. Sufficient time has not been available for a critical analysis of the proposal. A statement has been included in the WS 117L Development Plan dated 2 May 1956 that the RAND approach would be explored more fully and incorporated in the program if it appeared worth while.

3. Several comments can be made, however, which form the basis for a somewhat cautious attitude on the part of this Command.

a. A WS 117L capability meeting the time scales envisioned in the RAND report cannot be met without accepting a greater interference with the WS 107A Program than would result from the Program submitted in the 2 May 1956 Plan, regardless of the means used to return the information to the ground.

b. The time required to develop the data recovery system depends partly on the time available for ground development prior to first flight, and partly on the difficulty of the problem. Late booster availability would tend to favor more sophisticated data recovery means.

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c. Pending further analysis, the Western Development Division does not agree that the system proposed by RAND will, in fact, be easier to develop than electronic means. Experience to date with recovery of missile-borne equipment has frequently been discouraging.

d. The RAND system, to a certain extent, represents dead-end development which will be of limited usefulness.

4. When Headquarters USAF has taken action on the WS 117L Development Plan, and indicated in particular, the required availability date and the relative priority between this program and the WS 107A program, then this Command can make a more careful weighing of all the factors involved in carrying out the approach suggested.

O. J. RITLAND  
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