



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary of the Air Force

SUBJECT: Reconnaissance Satellites and Manned Space
Exploration

1. Reference is made to the Air Force proposal for accelerating military reconnaissance satellites and outer space vehicle projects discussed in your memorandum dated 12 November 1957, and your memorandum of 1 February 1958 requesting that continuation of the Air Force military reconnaissance project be clarified.

2. I have reviewed your proposal in consultation with the Director of Guided Missiles, the Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, and the Director of Central Intelligence. In our review we have been guided by the following general policy considerations:

a. The Department of Defense must be alert to avoid within and between the Services any unnecessary duplication of military and scientific space projects even though some degree of risk is thereby involved, in order that funds and other resources may be available for the large variety of absolutely essential programs.

b. The scientific and engineering capabilities of each of the Military Departments must be used with maximum effectiveness and efficiency. No single Military Department should be overloaded with too many high priority, crash programs.

c. In addition to its missile programs, the Air Force is responsible for the 117L advanced reconnaissance system and has a recognized long term development responsibility for manned space flight capability with the primary objective of accomplishing satellite flight as soon as technology permits. It is important to achieve an adequate concentration of effort and energy within the Air Force on these programs with a minimum diversion of attention and of resources to lower priority projects.

3. On the basis of the foregoing general considerations as well as of more specific technical judgments, I have arrived at the following conclusions on the points raised in the two above-referenced memoranda.

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a. The Atlas 117L project should be accelerated and carried forward under the highest national priority in order to attain an initial operational capability at the earliest possible date.

b. The proposed interim reconnaissance system made up of a Thor booster combined with a second stage which carries a light-weight payload in the form of a recoverable capsule, duplicates rather than complements the Atlas 117L capability. The interim system would give only a small improvement in time over the Atlas 117L. Moreover, the successful and continuous operation of a recoverable reconnaissance system, with the attendant requirement for search, appears infeasible from a practical and useable military point of view. Accordingly, the development of the interim system should not be pursued.

c. In order to attain early flights of the Lockheed vehicle to be employed as the second stage in the 117L system, it may be desirable for the Air Force to plan for test firings of this vehicle utilizing a Thor booster, since an adequate number of these less expensive boosters can be made available for this purpose sooner than the Atlas booster will be available.

d. I understand that a Thor booster with a suitable second stage vehicle may be the most promptly and readily available device for experimental flights with laboratory animals. The development of such hardware is authorized, including provision for the recovery of the animals, in furtherance of the objective of manned satellite flight.

Roy W. Johnson
Director
Advanced Research Projects Agency

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