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AFSCM Cont. #

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

March 6, 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Air Force THOR ICBM Program

- References: (a) Memo for Sec/Def from Sec/AF, dtd 14 Feb. 58,
subj: THOR and WS-117L Programs
- (b) Memo for DGM from Under Sec/AF, dtd 21 Feb.
58, no subject

Reference (a) sets forth five proposed projects which would make use of the THOR booster. Only one of these, the proposed THOR ICBM capability, falls within the assigned responsibility of this Office; the remainder are being considered by the Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency.

Reference (b) discusses in more detail the proposed THOR re-entry test vehicle program.

The use of the THOR booster and a suitable second stage appears to offer a desirable test vehicle for testing higher performance ICBM nose cone designs and I concur in the principle of its use for this purpose. It is further suggested that the evaluation of possible countermeasures to enemy defensive efforts be considered in the formulation of this program. However, decision to revise the present THOR production rate of six missiles per month is withheld pending receipt of the detailed development and supporting fiscal plan for this program.

On the basis of available data it appears premature to consider adapting the THOR re-entry test vehicle to an ICBM warhead delivery application and this proposed effort is therefore disapproved at this time. A basis for reconsideration of this proposed approach to an ICBM operational capability should include: (a) major slippage in approved ICBM program schedules and/or (b) demonstration of exceptional performance characteristics by the re-entry vehicle during test flights.

It is also requested that the Air Force ballistic missile program revision incorporating the THOR re-entry program be submitted to the OSD Ballistic Missiles Committee for review as soon as practicable.

DOWNGRADED AT 12 YEAR
INTERVALS; NOT AUTOMATICALLY
DECLASSIFIED. DOD DIR 5200.10

/s/ W. H. Holaday
W. H. Holaday
Director of Guided Missiles

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WD-58-02251

16 April 1958

Are we taking necessary action in
connection with this letter?

Col Curtin

WDT 18 April.

No action required.
We have never received
the letter through formal
channels. This is a
copy Jake brought back.
This is a Holiday-Douglas
matter, and Jake says that
in all probability, we will
never be requested to comply. Looney