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19 December 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Assessment of Possible Soviet Threats to Satellite
Reconnaissance

Throughout the past year, personnel of the intelligence community have occasionally referred to the possibility of the Soviets taking physical counteraction against our reconnaissance satellites. In response to this general indication that the possibility of such interference exists, we have taken various steps aimed at reducing the vulnerability of these satellites. In general, these steps will reduce the possibility of capture of such satellites, and will reduce their radius of vulnerability to nuclear radiation. However, at the present time we do not have any really effective means of coping with some possible means of direct attack on these satellites.

In order that we may take more positive measures to cope with such possible attacks, it is imperative that we have available more precise definition of the form which these attacks are likely to take, together with all known technical details, and the most probable locations for such attacks. Accordingly, I request a written summary of the present assessment of the threat of physical counteraction by the Soviets against our reconnaissance satellites, to include all known details as to the technical characteristics of the equipment, the type and method of the possible attacks, and the locations from which these attacks are likely to be made. While it is of considerable importance to have the judgment and opinion of experienced analysts in predicting this threat, the importance of specific technical facts should not be overlooked, and it is requested that the summary differentiate between such facts and opinion, however qualified.

I plan to review our current measures to reduce the vulnerability of these satellites in a special all-day session on the West Coast on 8 or 9 January 1963, with a view toward determining any changes or additional steps which should be undertaken. It would be most helpful if I could have the above summary prior to this meeting. In addition, I would suggest that the meeting include some discussion of this subject by an appropriate CIA representative.

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// Joseph V. Charyk
Director
~~(S)~~ National Recon Office

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