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FUNCTIONS: NRO
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(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

October 31, 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (SYSTEMS ANALYSIS)

SUBJECT: Systems Analysis Studies of the National Reconnaissance Program

This is in reply to your memorandum of August 30, 1966 concerning a proposed study of strategic overhead reconnaissance to be undertaken by your staff. I have previously discussed some of the implications of the proposed study with you and with Mr. Vance.

As you are aware the management, including program and budget review and approval, for the National Reconnaissance Program (NRP) is not handled in the usual DOD channels. Final review and recommendations for approval of the NRP program and budget are the responsibility of the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the NRP, of which Mr. Vance is the DOD member. Further, by agreement among the agencies involved, the NRP is not responsive to unique DOD requirements but to USIB requirements. Any proposed study affecting the NRP, and particularly one as broad as you have proposed, would impinge on the complicated and sensitive relationships between the ExCom, the several departments and agencies involved and myself as the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO). In any event, I think you will agree that the purpose of any systems analysis study should be to serve the specific needs of management. For these reasons, I consider that any proposed study of the NRP should be made only with the knowledge and concurrence of the ExCom.

Mr. Vance has suggested that we jointly consider specific areas where studies could be useful at this time. I believe that SIGINT collection is such an area. The satellite SIGINT budget, although currently a relatively small fraction of the NRP budget, is rapidly increasing (the proposed FY-68 budget). As technical capabilities for this

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mission area continue to improve we expect proposals for still further expansion of the satellite SIGINT program. The Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR) of the USIB has for the past year been attempting to assess the cost-effectiveness of the NRP SIGINT program, but in the relatively narrow context of overhead reconnaissance only. Satellite SIGINT collection interacts with ground and airborne collection efforts of various agencies, but the bulk of this other effort is by DOD components. Also because of the national SIGINT responsibilities of the NSA reporting through DRR&E, the DOD has a special interest and special responsibilities in this area. I would therefore suggest that a broad study of SIGINT collection requirements, programs and resource allocations would be timely, significant and appropriate for immediate initiation. If you agree I propose that you formulate a study plan and that it then be submitted to the ExCom for information and concurrence on the NRP aspects.

[redacted] of my office and [redacted] will serve as points of contact with the NRO staff to assist in the formulation and execution of this study. [redacted] has already discussed this problem with Mr. [redacted] of your staff.

In response to your request that you and Mr. [redacted] be kept abreast of new systems and cleared for any new compartmented clearance areas in the NRP, I have instructed the Director of the NRO staff, [redacted] to comply. However, with regard to the number and extent of additional clearances, I believe they should be governed by the needs engendered by approved study programs.

[redacted]

Alexander H. Flax

Copy for Mr. Vance

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