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26 June 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting on Further Action Under NSC Action 2454

1. NSC Action 2454 directed that studies be made to determine whether there are releaseable data such as mapping information which would help create wider public acceptance of space observation and photographs. In accordance with that directive, the Department of Defense prepared a draft plan for release of degraded ARGON photography.

2. A meeting, chaired by the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Mr. U. Alexis Johnson), was held at the State Department on 24 June 1963, to discuss the draft plan and the general concept on which it was based. The following personnel participated in the discussions:

Defense - Mr. Nitze  
Defense - Dr. McMillan  
ACDA-Mr. Fisher  
OST-Dr. Wiesner  
State/L-Mr. Meeker

USIA-Mr. Murrow  
NASC-Dr. Welsh  
NASA-Dr. Dryden  
S/AL-Amb. Thompson

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3. Basically, the discussions cover three areas of concern, as follows:

- a. Whether release of such materials would, in fact, materially contribute to the acceptance of the legality of terrestrial photography obtained by satellites.
- b. Soviet reaction and possible countermeasures.
- c. Concomitant effects on the security of our covert satellite reconnaissance programs.

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4. Regarding "acceptance", Mr. Meeker, Deputy Legal Counsel for the State Department, reported that at the most recent meeting of the Legal Subcommittee of the U. N. Committee on Outer Space, there was considerably more support for the U. S. position with regard to satellite observation than had been evident at last year's session. Several countries, including Canada and Italy, which previously had been reluctant to support the U. S. position, lined up solidly with the U. S. - U. K. bloc on the legality question. Although the Soviets tried to generate some opposition among those nations outside the Soviet Bloc, their efforts, for the most part, were unproductive.

5. In the light of Mr. Meeker's report, the group concluded that it was highly questionable that the release of materials as proposed would significantly contribute to international acceptance of the legality of such activities and, conversely, might precipitate an unfavorable reaction among those uncommitted nations which up to now have displayed a singular disinterest in the whole problem. As long as we are making some progress in establishing a favorable climate in the U. N., it was considered that it would be unwise, and self-defeating, to force the issue at this time.

6. Concerning Soviet reaction, it was noted by Mr. Murrow, and conceded by the group, that the Soviets, unless directly confronted in such a manner that they are forced to act in order to save face, traditionally have been willing to engage in polemics while, in fact, accepting the realities of a given situation without acknowledging that they have done so. It was agreed that release of satellite photography could result in a direct confrontation with the Soviets on this issue and probably would result in their undertaking active counter-measures. Mr. Murrow also noted that in his opinion the degraded materials which would be released would be almost patently "phony" and their publication might be regarded by many as an act of duplicity designed to deliberately mislead. Mr. Murrow expressed his view in an apt, though mixed metaphor, to the effect, "We might find we have opened a Pandora's Box only to find it filled with Trojan Horses".

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7. On the question of possible compromise of related [redacted] reconnaissance programs, the group concluded that the plan, if implemented, would undoubtedly jeopardize such programs. They were unable to perceive any way in which the release could plausibly be made without identifying the vehicle used, the launch base, recovery base, camera type, etc. The problem of re-indoctrinating the approximately 10,000 holders of T-KH clearances was also recognized to be of appalling magnitude.

8. In view of the foregoing, the group unanimously concluded that implementation of the draft plan for release of satellite photography would be undesirable and unwise. A memorandum noting this discussion and recommending against such action is being prepared by the State Department for transmittal to the Hon. MacGeorge Bundy.

9. The CIA position as expressed during the course of the discussions, was essentially that contained in the draft memorandum (not distributed) attached hereto.

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OSA/SAL: [redacted]:mac

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DRAFT (not distributed)  
24 June 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Defense	- Mr. Nitze	USIA	- Mr. Murrow
Defense	- Mr. McMillan	NASC	- Dr. Welsh
ACDA	- Mr. Fisher	OST	- Dr. Wiesner
White House	- Mr. Kaysen	S/AL	- Amb. Thompson
NASA	- Dr. Seamans	INR	- Mr. Hughes
		L	- Mr. Meeker

SUBJECT: Further Action Under NSC Action 2454

1. The CIA has studied the draft plan for release of terrestrial photographs taken from satellites and, for reasons outlined below, does not concur in the initiation of this plan.

2. The release of satellite mapping photography will jeopardize CORONA security. The plan makes no provision for the protection of the operational aspects of ARGON which are, of course, identical with those of CORONA except for the camera package. We believe that the ARGON photography cannot be released without identifying the vehicle used, the launch base, the recovery base, the type of camera used and who manufactured it. This being the case, the [Redacted] 25X1A

[Redacted] would immediately be identified as a [Redacted] 25X1  
[Redacted] reconnaissance facility. Concomitantly, [Redacted] 25X1A  
(CORONA), since, it would have to be identified as the vehicle  
for obtaining the photography, would also be identified as a [Redacted] 25X1

[Redacted]

3. Another security problem in the draft plan is that of re-indoctrination of the approximately ten thousand people holding

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T-KH clearances, a task assigned to CIA. We believe it would be close to impossible to re-educate these people sufficiently to the point that they would not inadvertently disclose their association or knowledge of the released photography and the formerly [redacted]

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5. Further, with the public identification of the purpose and vehicles of our programs, we believe that the USSR might feel licensed to take positive countermeasures against our vehicles as they traverse space over the Soviet Union.

6. The CIA General Counsel is of the opinion that successful initiation of this plan would have no real effect on the legal status of such programs. Acceptance of the concept by one country and non-acceptance by another would have no bearing on the ultimate establishment of legality on a world-wide basis.

7. In brief, it is the CIA view that the possible benefits to be derived from the plan are not at all clear, that the probability of achieving the objectives are by no means high. Conversely, we believe

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that the hazards to our present programs are very clear and that the probability of detrimental effects on our programs, either through political or direct counter actions, are very high indeed.

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