

~~TOP SECRET~~

HANDLE VIA
(b)(1)1.5c
CONTROL SYSTEM

~~(S)~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

October 25, 1973

Dr. McLucas has seen.

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. McLUCAS

SUBJECT: Denied Area Aircraft Reconnaissance

The August 11, 1965 Agreement for Reorganization of the National Reconnaissance Program (TAB A) and DOD Directive 5105.23, ~~(S)~~ National Reconnaissance Office (TAB B), March 27, 1964, undeniably place the responsibility for denied area aircraft reconnaissance with the DNRO. While the responsibility is clear, the means of implementation have proven less than satisfactory.

For the DNRO to effectively implement control of aircraft overflight missions, an aircraft operations center would be required. This was proposed in the very early 1960s, and considerable discussion was held between the NRO, JCS, and the CIA Program B Office responsible for the U-2 and OXCART. The idea never came to fruition, however, and today we find only one person in the NRO SOC responsible full-time for aircraft.

For normal non-conflict situations we have a smooth working relationship with both the JCS Joint Reconnaissance Center and the CIA Reconnaissance Program Office of Special Activities. Each month both organizations formally submit a request for overflights for the following month, and these are incorporated, invariably as requested, in the forecast which you approve and send to the 40 Committee. (The forecasts for October and November 1973 are at TABS C and D.) Several years ago and by mutual agreement total responsibility for Southeast Asia overflights was released from the NRO approving scheme, which left basically the Chinese and Cuba U-2 missions as recurring NRO requirements. The SR-71 missions flown over North Korea were forecast through the NRO and this

HANDLE VIA
(b)(1)1.5c
CONTROL SYSTEM

CLASSIFIED BY ~~(S)~~ EXEMPT FROM
GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652 EXEMPTION CATE-
GORY 5B2 DECLASSIFY ON IMP DET.

~~TOP SECRET~~

22

CONTROL NO. (b)(1)1322
COPY 2 OF COPI
PAGE 1 OF PAG

~~TOP SECRET~~

HANDLE VIA
(b)(1)1.5c
CONTROL SYSTEM

procedure worked smoothly because time was not critical and approvals could be worked well in advance. The recent U-2 Gulf of Tonkin missions were also sent to you for approval before submission to the 40 Committee.

When a crisis situation arises, we find that there are flaws in the system that are not easily overcome. Two examples come to mind. In 1970 the U.S. Government needed an intelligence baseline at the time of the Israeli-Egyptian cease-fire, and the U-2 EVEN STEVEN missions were conceived. Apparently the decision to employ CIA U-2 aircraft was made between the Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Secretary of Defense; in any event, the NRO became aware of the missions well after the planning was started and was not in the initial approval loop. The second example is the present Mid-East conflict and the decisions to fly the SR-71 GIANT REACH and deploy the U-2 (b)(1)1.5c missions. (See EVEN STEVEN memos at TAB E.)

Approval for the GIANT REACH mission was requested directly from the 40 Committee by the Chairman of the JCS (TAB F). Here again we are caught in a crisis situation and not included in the approval cycle for a mission of considerable national importance and, of course, risk. The (b)(1)1.5c mission, similarly, was not formally sent through the NRO when changed from an exercise to a proposed overflight operation.

The real question is whether or not the way we operate is the best way. There are several facets to aircraft overflight operations. First is the responsibility aspect; by charter the DNRO is responsible. Since May 1, 1960, we have been lucky in not losing any attributable missions over foreign soil. But because the DNRO is charged with the missions, he should certainly have a say in their formulation and conduct. The DNRO is also charged with the preparation of contingency plans, and in practice these must be updated for each new kind of mission. We have found ourselves reacting rather than planning, when this might have been unnecessary if we had been included earlier in the cycle. I think it is vital that all concerned know what to do in the event of an incident, particularly an operational incident where a crew may be involved. The U.S. Government should not be faced with an embarrassing situation such as the confusion associated with the 1960 U-2 incident. And of course, the NRO is best qualified to trade off potential satellite coverage against aircraft capabilities.

HANDLE VIA
(b)(1)1.5c
CONTROL SYSTEM

CLASSIFIED BY [REDACTED] EXEMPT FROM
GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652 EXEMPTION CATE-
GORY 5B2 DECLASSIFY ON IMP DET.

~~TOP SECRET~~

CONTROL NUMBER (b)(1)1.322
COPY _____ OF _____ COP
PAGE 2 OF _____ PAC

These arguments are all reasons why the DNRO should continue to be a central figure in aircraft crisis operations. Reasons for relinquishing this control include the following.

First, we do not maintain a viable capability to plan or even react to fast changing world crises. The CIA U-2 people and the JRC do, and there is little reason why the NRO should man for contingencies such as we have seen. Also, there is not much trade off between aircraft and satellite collection options in a crisis situation. (b)(1)1.5c

(b)(1)1.5c
(b)(1)1.5c but this does not require the DNRO to approve the aircraft missions.

On May 31, 1963, Deputy Secretary of Defense Mr. Roswell Gilpatric signed a memorandum for the Chairman, JCS and the DNRO on Operational Aspects of the NRO (TAB G). The organizational agreement referred to in Mr. Gilpatric's memo was never consummated, but para c contains a statement which still seems to bear on the problem--"I agree with the specific recommendation of the Director, NRO, concurred in by the Chiefs, that NRO responsibility for aircraft overflights will shift to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in periods of tension. Such shifts of responsibility will be submitted to the Secretary of Defense for approval." Current events seem to confirm that the JCS assumes aircraft overflight responsibility in periods of tension. It is not clear that such shifts of responsibility are submitted to the Secretary of Defense for approval, for we have seen no correspondence either to the Secretary or from him. The DNRO should certainly be a party to such an approval.

Looking to the future we see even less need for the NRO to be involved in aircraft overflight operations. Combination of the U-2 fleet with the SAC fleet will put all reconnaissance operations under a single point, the JRC, and delete the last aircraft program from the NRP. And in not too long a time we will have (b)(1)1.5c

(b)(1)1.5c One can envision an ever-decreasing role for the kinds of aircraft overflights the NRO is charged with.

~~TOP SECRET~~

HANDLE VIA
(b)(1)1.5c
CONTROL SYSTEM

It appears that a change in the formally chartered procedure which recognizes the current and future environment, is a logical step. This could be reflected in a formal recognition of the role of the JCS stated in Mr. Gilpatric's memorandum of May 31, 1963. If you agree with this approach, we will prepare the correspondence to start the change to the NRO charter and work with the JCS on their assumption of the full responsibility. Implicit in this approach would be changing the role of the Interdepartmental Contingency Planning Committee to delete the DNRO's responsibility for air vehicle overflight contingency planning. (The ICPC Charter is at TAB H.) If you do not agree in this change to the NRO charter, then we should arrange to have a more positive role in the control of aircraft overflights of denied territory.

At the right is a talking paper for your use on this subject.

(b)(3), (b)(6)

Lt Colonel, USAF

(b)(3), (b)(6)

HANDLE VIA
(b)(1)1.5c
CONTROL SYSTEM

CLASSIFIED BY [REDACTED] EXEMPT FROM
GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652 EXEMPTION CATE-
GORY 582 DECLASSIFY ON IMP DET.

~~TOP SECRET~~

CONTROL NO (b)(1)1.3227
COPY ___ OF ___ COPIES
PAGE 4 OF 4 PAGE