

Political Action and Satellite Reconnaissance

Reconnaissance information from overflights of the U.S.S.R. is now vital for U. S. security--to insure adequate order of battle, economic data, warnings of surprise, and the like.

Satellites programs -in-being and planned can substantially provide this information--in preliminary form during 1959, and in major detail in 1961 and thereafter.

THE PROBLEM

The problem is not a problem of technology. It is not a problem of vulnerability to Soviet military measures. The problem is one of the political vulnerability of current reconnaissance satellite programs.

For many years the U. S. has had overflight capabilities (aircraft and balloons) which have been substantially invulnerable to Soviet military countermeasures, but very vulnerable politically. Already the Communists (East Germany) have attacked Discoverer I as an espionage activity, and we can anticipate powerful Soviet political countermeasures to the Discoverer/Sentry series.

The programs are now cast in attempted "black" or "top secret" contexts which are impractical to maintain except perhaps initially. The accuracy of press reporting of current activities is ample evidence of this problem.

Such an "espionage" context is the worst possible from the view-point of political vulnerability. Covert satellites, being impractical of hiding for long, are virtually as vulnerable to Soviet political countermeasures as a/c and balloons have been.

Satellites are our last chance. Should reconnaissance satellites be "politically shot-down", no scientific or technological opportunity can be foreseen to obtain this security information during the forthcoming critical years.

THE APPROACH TO A SOLUTION

What is needed is a program to put reconnaissance satellites "in the white" through early and vigorous political action designed to:

1. blunt in advance Soviet political countermeasures;
2. gain world acceptance for the notion that surveillance satellites are powerful servants of world peace and security, and are not illegitimate instruments of espionage;
3. regain the political initiative of the "open skies" proposal.

OPPORTUNITIES

Many opportunities for such political action lie in:

- negotiations for control and freedom of space;
- weather, geodetic, and communication satellites gradually establishing the freedom of space as a matter of common law;
- negotiations for suspension of atmospheric nuclear tests because they can be detected by ground stations, peripheral air sampling, and satellite detection;
- negotiations for control systems to warn of surprise;
- minimizing direct political linking of surveillance satellites to targeting intelligence and alleged first-strike opportunism by operating reconnaissance satellites through an agency other than SAC;
- measures to make evident to the world public that the Russians, to insure the accuracy of their IRBM and ICBM's, could well be photographing the rest of the world now with their Sputniks;
- an offer to make the results of satellite surveillance available to nations through the U. N.; and
- possibly a dramatic "atoms-for-peace" type proposal to build and operate peaceful surveillance satellites in behalf of the U. N.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The governmental action immediately needed is establishing a small group to develop and put into effect a coherent, imaginative political action program phased closely with programmed satellite activities. This probably should be organized under the NSC, with strong participation by key, knowledgeable personnel from State, CIA, DOD (USAF) and the Killian office.

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4-24-59

