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MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
(RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT)

SUBJECT: MIDAS System

As I have previously pointed out, the MIDAS system should not be oriented toward an operational system at this time. Nevertheless, informal reports indicate that there continues to be some Air Force sentiment urging that MIDAS be made operational as soon as possible, based on a capability of providing early warning on Atlas-type ICBMs. I therefore believe that I should reaffirm my position on MIDAS.

The projected Soviet ICBM operational deployment may contain only a small quantity of Type A ICBMs (having high IR radiance); the bulk of their operational ICBMs may be Type B vehicles, thought to employ storable propellants with a lower value of IR radiance. From this standpoint, there is little point, if any, in deploying an operational MIDAS system which might have the capability to detect only the small portion of the Soviet ICBM force represented by the Type A vehicles.

As you know, the results achieved to date on the MIDAS program have not yet provided satisfactory answers to several fundamental questions concerning the basic performance characteristics of the current design concept.

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In view of this situation, I reaffirm my position that MIDAS must remain an R&D program oriented toward developing the techniques necessary to resolve the remaining basic issues and must not contain program elements which are time-oriented toward a specific operational date. For example, there should not be a series of six almost identical flights followed by six identical ones which, if they operated, would constitute a "system."

Such an approach would make it almost impossible to solve the design and test problems which have so far resulted in the acquisition of very little in-flight data. By inhibiting the design of new payloads, it would also be likely to present us with a "system" which generally did not work, and, when it did, could see only the few missiles of high radiance.

(Signature)
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