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The Honorable Clark M. Clifford  
Secretary of Defense  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Clark:

I have just heard a briefing by technical personnel of NASA Langley. Their conclusions, if borne out by further analysis, could have critical implications for U.S. defense planning.

The subject matter concerns the capabilities of Soviet aircraft, missiles, and spacecraft. In brief, the NASA people have contrived to construct models of certain Soviet equipment from photographic and other descriptive material, to test them in wind tunnels, and to subject them to computer simulations. This work was undertaken at the request of the intelligence community. NASA Langley was used because of their unique facilities and recognized competence in this field.

The results to date are disturbing. For example, aircraft such as FISHBED and FOXBAT are found to be superior in most important performance characteristics to U.S. combat aircraft now in service. Design features on several Soviet missile systems show similar advances. The general conclusion is that Soviet aerodynamic design capabilities are far advanced, and at the present rate of effort the USSR may well enjoy an ever increasing advantage over our aerospace vehicles.

We will be discussing the matter with some of your senior officials soon. In the meantime, I wanted to advise you of it directly.

Sincerely,

/s/ Richard Helms

Richard Helms  
Director

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