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CONTROL SYSTEM~~187~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

2 March 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL BERG

SUBJECT: TAGBOARD

~~NOT SENT~~

1. Aside from satellites, TAGBOARD is probably the best potential aircraft overflight system that we have on the drawing boards today. The fact that it is unmanned makes it somewhat attractive (see item 3, below) from a political standpoint. During its flight phase (90,000 feet @ 3.3) it is invulnerable to presently know air defense systems. Conversely, it is particularly vulnerable during the pre-launch phase (while still aboard the B-52H). The entire payload recovery operation is also vulnerable. Necessary pre-positioning of recovery forces (essentially same as used for satellite recovery) pinpoints recovery area for anyone interested in preventing recovery.

2. TAGBOARD is not yet an operational program: Of five launchings, using the A-12 "mother ship", a payload was never recovered; launch from the B-52 is yet to be demonstrated - the system must be requalified with the B-52 launch aircraft. Thus, it will be some time before the system can be considered operations ready.

3. If TAGBOARD could be made ready tomorrow, there is serious doubt that the 303 would authorize its employment. First, the sonic boom effect of this supersonic vehicle on things and people on the ground is yet to be determined. TAGBOARD is a large airplane - it incorporates an explosive charge designed to destroy the airplane shortly after the payload is ejected. Under not-too-far-fetched conditions, a malfunction could cause TAGBOARD to go ballistic and impact on Peiping, Hong Kong, etc. With these probabilities in mind (albeit remote) the State Department and 303 Committee would probably be unwilling to authorize employment of TAGBOARD.

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4. The BOB has been asking penetrating questions about the future of this system - 14 TAGBOARD drones (remaining from the first buy) are "stacked like cord-wood" at Lockheed. Additional systems are being procured. The systems are expensive (about \$ 3 million each) and are expended in a single flight.

5. When TAGBOARD becomes operational, it is to be operated by SAC. In the event that it is to be used for over-flights, the requests for authorization, etc. could be processed from SAC to the JCS (JRC) thence to the 303 - by way of the NRO - as are the Blue Springs/Wild Rice type missions.

6. has this to say about TAGBOARD.

- a. It's still in the NRP 5 year program.
- b. It's funded under the same classified line item as are the 147 drones.
- c. Dr. Flax has said that, if he is pressured to reduce the number of programs in the NRP, TAGBOARD would be the first to go.
- d. TAGBOARD could then be transferred to the Air Staff and handled as are the Ryan 147 type drones.

Summary:

- a. TAGBOARD has a long way to go before its operational ready.
- b. There are reasons why TAGBOARD flights might not be authorized by the 303.
- c. The continued development of the system could be assumed by the Air Staff and it should be assigned to SAC for operation.
- d. In my opinion TAGBOARD management responsibility should not be moved from AFRDR-P to the NRO Staff.

RQ
RICHARD S. QUIGGINS
Colonel, USAF

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