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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

13 June 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

SUBJECT: Army Participation in the Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL)
Program

References:

- a. Memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of the Army (R&D),
6 April 1966, subject: Manned Orbiting Laboratory.
- b. Memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (R&D),
23 February 1966, subject: Manned Orbiting Laboratory.

Your memorandum of 6 April 1966 (reference a, above) contains additional information on the MOL Program which was not available when the original Army proposal for participation in the MOL Program was prepared. Based on this additional information, the Army proposals in reference b, above, have been reviewed and modification of these proposals now seem appropriate.

As a basic consideration, it is apparent that the high resolution photography, to be obtained through the approved MOL mission, will be of direct and immediate value to the Army, both for tactical field operations and for long-term, more deliberate intelligence functions. Our experience in Vietnam has exposed a most important need for the rapid acquisition and transmission to Army field commanders of information which cannot be obtained by existing facilities.

Concerning acquisition systems, I feel it is axiomatic that the users of information should participate in the development of collection capabilities. This is necessary both to assist in obtaining information in a format which is suitable to the user, and to insure that techniques and procedures for exploiting information are developed concurrently with the development of the collection capabilities. For this reason, it is proposed that a well-qualified Army officer be assigned to the MOL Program Office in Washington for full-time work. Discussion with members of the MOL Program Office indicate that assignment to the MOL Test Operations Division or the MOL Mission Planning Division would be appropriate for this officer.

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Page 1 of 2 pages

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The second important factor is that information be made available to the user (in this case the Army field commander) on a timely basis. The plan to use wide-band transmission techniques to provide prompt read-out of selected portions of photography is, therefore, of major interest to the Army. The communications techniques and read-out facilities should provide appropriate information to Army command elements in a battlefield environment. In order to provide an input on Army requirements and to take advantage of Army experience and capabilities in satellite communications, the assignment of a suitably qualified Army officer to the MOL System Office at the USAF Space Systems Division is proposed.

Since SIGINT activities for MOL are not yet fully established, assignment of an Army officer to this activity appears to be premature. This would, of course, be reconsidered as the program evolves. Until that time, the Army officer to be assigned to the MOL Program Office in Washington could monitor this activity as appropriate.

The proposal, outlined above, to assign Army officers to the MOL Program represents careful consideration of essential Army interests and capabilities. I hope you will agree that the action I have proposed will make substantial contributions to the entire MOL Program as well as satisfying significant Army needs. With your agreement, we will proceed to make the necessary arrangements with the MOL Program Office for the assignment of Army officers to the MOL Program. The matter of assigning additional Army officers to the National Reconnaissance Office, in addition to those proposed for the MOL Program, will be considered separately.



Willis M. Hawkins
Assistant Secretary of the Army (R&D)

See A Cy 1
page 2 of 2 pages

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