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COMMENTS ON TWX ON PROVISIONS OF DRV AND WBDL IN MOL

A. General Comments:

The seven-flight MOL Program has been considered primarily as a research and development program although the third and subsequent flights are intended to produce valuable target intelligence. One of the primary objectives of the seven-flight program, as stated in the Flight Objectives Directive for MOL dated 2/8/67, has been to obtain quantitative data which will permit assessment of the nature and value of critical contributions of man in increasing the quantity and quality of intelligence data obtained by use of the MOL intelligence collection system. Sufficient data was to have been obtained to permit an unequivocal comparison between optimized manned and optimized unmanned modes of operation. Not too long ago we thought that the MOL baseline program had the option to fly the last two flights manned in case something occurred to the automatic devices which would make it injudicious to fly the last two flights unmanned or in case man provided sufficient enhancement of intelligence content that the decision to go unmanned would be inappropriate from the standpoint of intelligence collection.

The baseline MOL Program no longer has preserved the option for flights 6 and 7 to be flown in the manned mode. The WBDL has been removed from the baseline program. Now it has been proposed that the film processor be eliminated except for five frames per day. Additionally it is understood that proposals have already been made to remove the secondary camera. Will the ATS and then man go?

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Thus the flexibility of man in the MOL has been gradually but steadily eroded. Flights 3, 4, and 5 will not be optimized for man. The research and development capability is being diminished and the capability to obtain sufficient data on man's ability to enhance the value of target intelligence has been reduced so much that a valid comparison between an optimized manned and optimized unmanned modes of operation will be difficult or impossible to be made.

There persists within the MOL Program Office the uneasy feeling that man is methodically being eliminated from the MOL Program. Fighting for the retention of the film processor is but a small part of the whole picture. No one single event such as the readout or the film processor noted above could make or break the case that man's contribution is being endangered or reduced to an insignificant point. However, together the compiled effect is one of reducing man's effectiveness or possible contribution to terms where he is doing only the job of the automatic system or at best only backing up a failed automatic system. Thus, unmanned flights, by default or by any economical comparison, must prove to be the most effective. The trend as noted here is one assuming that the basic resolution is so much in doubt that all costs and engineering decisions must be taken at the expense of all of the other program objectives (i.e., man's capability, data on increasing resolution). Similarly the insistence on 30 days of operation seems to override the value of testing the crew contribution even though it is for lesser periods of time. It would appear, from an Air Force point of view, that demonstration of man's capabilities to operate in a military mode is more valuable than sheer staying power for 30 days.

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B. Specific Comments on the Twx:

There appears to be an inconsistency between paragraph 1 of the TWX and Section D of SAFSL Memo for Record, subj: Minutes, April 14 MOL Management Meeting. The TWX states that a decision had been made that it was desired if feasible to retain DRV and WBDL provisions in MOL flights 3, 4, and 5. The minutes of the meeting were specific that space, weight and power provisions would be retained in MOL flights 3, 4 and 5.

The briefing charts used at the MOL Management Meeting showed that \$4.9 million in FY-68 would be saved by deleting DRV and WBDL from baseline MOL. The TWX stated that it would cost \$5.5M in FY-68 to maintain the option of DRV and WBDL in flights 3, 4 and 5. Thus DRV and WBDL could be retained in the baseline at a savings of \$600,000 in FY-68 over maintaining an option for installing DRV and WBDL.

Paragraph 7 of the TWX states that retentions of DRV and WBDL would eliminate the capability of flying in a 90° inclined orbit. This is not so according to the minutes of the MOL Management Meeting. There would be little weight margin, but the TIII M would still have the capability of a 90° orbit. Also there is nothing sacred about either 80° or 90° inclination or 10° increments. Why not 85° or 86°? Why not tradeoff against a shorter mission?

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Retain within the baseline MOL Program (flights 3, 4, and 5) all provisions which will optimize a manned mode so that a fair evaluation of man's role in this military mission can be made.

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We should not make a big issue of the reduced capacity film processor but should reexamine the reduced flexibility of man in the MOL. A strong case cannot be built for retaining the capability of developing 40 frames/day versus 5 frames/day especially since the WBDL has been deleted.

The real decision is one for the program to decide whether it is to continue the man/unmanned comparison or not.

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