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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

6 DEC 1968

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The Honorable Paul H. Nitze
Deputy Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
Washington, D.C.

Dear Paul:

Dr. Foster requested that I provide comments on his most recent Development Concept Paper relating to the MOL Program. My general views on this subject were covered in a letter dated 15 May 1968 and are appropriately reflected in his Paper. I have received no information since then which would cause me to change these views.

In my letter I suggested the Department of Defense study what significant savings in US military programs might be associated with any improvement in intelligence attributable to MOL photography. I also noted the desirability of an investigation of the possibility of a less expensive system for collecting essentially the same quality photography as the MOL. Since this subject is not treated in the Development Concept Paper, I presume that no determination has as yet been made as to the feasibility of this approach. The need for such an investigation appears all the more important in view of the very large cost (\$100 million or more per launch) estimated for operating the system after it is developed.

Members of my staff have participated in certain phases of the DDR&E study and have briefly reviewed the Development Concept Paper. They generally consider it an appropriate treatment of the subject, but believe it conveys an overly optimistic assessment of the potential value of the very high resolution photography anticipated from MOL. Under these circumstances I think it would be inappropriate for me to concur with the recommendations

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contained in the Paper, but since these recommendations are in large part based on anticipated savings to the Department of Defense attributable to MOL photography, I am in no position to dispute this aspect of the Paper.

In summary, I continue to feel that MOL-type photography would make a useful contribution to intelligence, but fail to find benefits from the MOL Program of sufficient importance to national intelligence to justify the estimated cost. Nevertheless, if a decision to continue the Program is made, I would reaffirm my earlier statement that the intelligence community should have the major role in collection tasking and in product exploitation just as it does for other collection systems which have important contributions to make to intelligence.

Sincerely,

Rich

Richard Helms
Director

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