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~~IS~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

November 12, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR COLONEL YOST

SUBJECT: Itek 12" Brief to NASA

On the surface there are no basic problems with Itek's request to present their proposal for NASA's use of the 12" SI. Closer scrutiny raises some very fundamental questions that must be answered before the NRO goes much further in the disposition of its technology--either obsolete or that which is barely off the drawing boards.

Until the basic problems are solved I would emphatically urge that the Itek request be DISAPPROVED.

Bill Williamson was in on the 10th of November and drew a picture on this order--the overall objective is a real time readout program on the order of [REDACTED] or whatever goes, but in a synchronous orbit. Rather than have NASA develop a low resolution system, it is felt that it would be more productive to let the NRO develop a high resolution system that could meet NASA requirements in five years or so from synchronous orbit. In the meantime, modified CORONA vehicles (two or three) could be used to initiate the program for U.S. earth resources. The 12" camera would be used on these vehicles and possibly for moon application, or about five or six SI's in their total buy.

The fundamental questions that must be answered are:

a. Are you going to permit NRO contracts to prepare unsolicited proposals for NRP technology as they see needs to exist? This is an issue we have fought with fair success. If it is to be permitted, where is the line drawn--both from a security and management point of view.

PERCHERON DORIAN UPWARD
[REDACTED] CORONA HEXAGON

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If Itek is permitted to submit their unsolicited proposal, we shall have established a precedence that will haunt us continually in the future, regardless of what words have been used as background material.

RECOMMENDATION:

If NASA is genuinely interested in the SI camera, they should request the material.

If it is in the NRO's interest that NASA use or consider the 12" system, the NRO, not the contractor, should attempt to interest NASA.

b. What is to be the NRO's policy, or perhaps it is better to say, what is to be the Administrations' policy in the degree of cooperation between the NRO and NASA for the development of systems? Is there a long term plan for the conversion of NRO systems for domestic or civilian applications? If this is the case, what systems for what application in the longest possible definition? If it is known now that [REDACTED] will have eventual NASA application, should that application be considered at this time?

RECOMMENDATION:

A total plan must be adopted to cover all aspects of systems or technology to be shared between NASA and the NRO. It is neither efficient nor practical to develop piecemeal ad hoc solutions to the question of joint system utilization. If NASA is to be given CORONA systems, and if those systems are to incorporate the HEXAGON SI camera and eventually be replaced by [REDACTED] type technology developed by the NRO, we had best decide our path now for the total program. The question of the SI proposal becomes inconsequential except that it could lead us to the path of commitment against our will, or without reasonable control.

There is too the fact that if the NRO and NASA are able to fully cooperate on a future endeavor, the job of protecting the NRO's security environment will be most difficult with planning and control. If the job is to be done on an ad hoc basis, the role of the NRO--or a DOD SECRET endeavor, if that is what lies ahead (not recommended)--would be neigh impossible.

PERCHERON DORIAN UPWARD
[REDACTED] CORONA HEXAGON

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c. If the NRO is to provide technology, how is it to be done? Do we operate joint facilities? Are they white, black or gray? Are they our cover? Are we their cover? Do we surface equipment? Do they redesign or reinvent equipment? Is NASA to use or limit themselves to our contractors? Who has priority? Could we fly their missions for them--is a charter realignment in order?

CONCLUSIONS:

In the past the NRO has been burned by attempts to surface NRP technology; i.e., PERCHERON, UPWARD...now perhaps DORIAN ATS, etal. While it appears that this is a simple task, it is not--and under optimum conditions--it is risky, but probably not impossible. There are real benefits to be enjoyed by the nation if it can be done, and a terrible loss to the nation if not done properly. Before any more attempts are made to piecemeal the technology of the NRO, either with or without our consent, a total study must be made of the long-term goal or plan and a philosophy, policy or modus operandi adopted.

The 12" is a method of triggering the entire question; therefore, no action should be taken until such a policy has been formally adopted, and positively no action should be taken to satisfy a contractor's desire to "expand his market."



Captain, USAF
Dep Asst for Security

DORIAN UPWARD

 CORONA HEXAGON PERCHERON

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