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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Requirement for Photographic Reconnaissance
in the Event US Reconnaissance Satellites are
Attacked

1. In the event that the Soviet Union attacked and disabled one of our large low-level photo reconnaissance satellites the most immediate intelligence requirement, of course, would be to determine the reasons for the interference and to estimate the courses of action that the Soviet Union might be following.

Circumstances

2. The recent (July 1970) Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE 11-12-70) on this subject concluded that there were two situations in which the Soviet Union might attempt to interfere with US satellites. They would probably do so in retaliation if they believed that the US had deliberately interfered with a Soviet satellite, and they would probably see advantage in neutralizing the US satellite reconnaissance capability in the event of a US-Soviet war, either nuclear or non-nuclear. It was judged doubtful that the Soviets would attack US satellites prior to the initiation of hostilities because in a period of heightened tension which would precede a US-Soviet conflict that act itself might be assessed as part of a general attack.

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3. Other situations where the Soviets might attack US satellites have also been suggested. These range from prolonged intense crises where Soviet motivation might be a show of power and denial of intelligence, to quantitative or qualitative upgrade of strategic forces where the motivation would be denial of all overhead reconnaissance.

Photo Reconnaissance Requirements

4. Unless Soviet motivation were clearly attributable to some lesser cause, the major immediate post-attack requirement would be to determine if war were imminent, despite the estimated improbability of hostile action. In terms of photo reconnaissance this would translate into a need to obtain immediate, and, if feasible repeated, coverage of at least a limited sample (perhaps 100) of key Soviet military installations from among those (500) which have been earmarked as warning/indications targets. These carefully selected targets are distributed across the USSR and include representative installations or bases from all major force elements. The purpose of the photography of these installations would be to determine the presence or absence of abnormal activity in the forces which they represent. Photo reconnaissance systems would not provide tactical warning of an attack in process.

5. To be of value in determining if an attack on a satellite was an immediate prelude to general war, a follow-up US satellite or other photo reconnaissance platform would have to be able to react immediately and provide delivered imagery within less than 24 to 48 hours of the attack on the satellite. For these initial purposes the imagery requirements would be limited in quantity, would be installation-oriented, two-to-three-foot resolution quality would be needed, and a premium would be on daily access to targets and rapidity of response. The objective

of the imagery would be to determine the intention of the Soviet Union, and, short of general war, learn the reasons for interference. The capability would be needed immediately following the attack and periodically thereafter for as long as attacks on major systems continued.

6. In second priority would be the necessity to acquire search coverage to uncover new activities which might have important military or scientific significance. In terms of the intelligence base alone it probably would be acceptable to do without search for several months in the same sense that such intervals occur between regularly programmed search missions. The need to initiate or resume area search, however, would depend on the interpretation placed on the course of Soviet action as well as the quality and quantity of the intelligence base on the Sino-Soviet area at the outset of a sustained program to deny reconnaissance. In any event, the need for search coverage would increase as hostile action continued.

7. In sum, the requirements for photographic reconnaissance in the event US reconnaissance satellites are attacked are well understood in relation to each of the various situations which might engender such an attack. At the most extreme end of the scale--general war--photographic reconnaissance would be aimed against strategic warning/indications targets with a premium on timeliness of data return. At the other end of the scale, where the motivation might be denial of intelligence on long-range programs related to quantitative or qualitative upgrade of strategic forces, the photographic reconnaissance requirement would be to reestablish search and surveillance coverage of the quality and quantity now specified in standing requirements.

8. Interference itself has been estimated to be improbable. It clearly is not possible to predict precise circumstances under which such might occur, but these will dictate the nature of the immediate photo reconnaissance requirements which would follow.