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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

21 DEC 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. REBER

SUBJECT: MOL-USIB Relationship

I gave some thought to your question as to what should be the relationship of MOL to USIB. I found I had to go back to a more basic question: What is MOL - is it a manned orbiting laboratory or is it reconnaissance?

Notwithstanding the fact that MOL was justified based upon a requirement for improved high resolution photography, MOL is still essentially a manned orbiting laboratory. One of the most significant factors it will demonstrate is man's ability to perform designated, militarily useful tasks in space for periods up to 30 days operating in a shirt sleeve environment. That the basis of the demonstration is reconnaissance is not germane. We shouldn't at this time prejudge his ability to perform other useful military tasks.

Intelligence, therefore, is only a passenger on MOL. It should not control the stock, because in so doing it might stifle national imagination and ingenuity. But as today's principal customer, it should express its preferences with respect to the sandwiches, drinks, and movies.

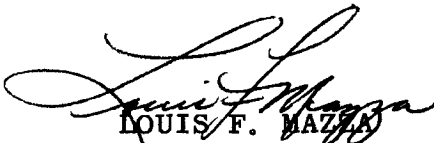
In summation, I feel that the management of MOL should allow that reconnaissance-related R&D stem from USIB requirements. However, should the occasion arise when there must be a trade-off between reconnaissance and some other militarily useful function, the intelligence community should be only a contributor to that decision.

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I have examined several alternative methods whereby the present situation might be corrected and I am convinced that for practical reasons it would be preferable if the initiative were taken by the DCI.

  
LOUIS F. MAZZA  
Chief Security Officer  
NRO Staff

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