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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON 20330

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PRO A-5-a



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

December 24, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: MOL Briefing for Dr. Townes' Space Task Group

I gave an abbreviated MOL/DORIAN briefing to Dr. Townes' Space Task Group (established by the President-Elect) on December 23 at the National Academy of Sciences building. Members of the Space Task Group who were present are listed in Atch 1.

The MOL presentation was part of a brief DoD Space Program overview requested by Dr. Townes. Representing the DoD were Mr. Barfield and Captain Lobdell (DDR&E -- the latter is not cleared and was not present during the MOL session), General Hedrick and Colonel Brill (AFRDS), [REDACTED] (SAFSS), and myself.

We understood that in the morning the Space Task Group had been briefed by NASA (AAP was one subject) and the CIA (an SI/TK briefing on the Russian Space Program. Dr. Lauderdale advised me that none of the NRP systems were discussed).

Captain Lobdell first discussed the portion of the DoD budget allocated to space activities over the past eight years (\$2.1 billion in FY 69) and briefly described each of the major SAR-classified systems (Comsat, 949, etc.) in operation and/or development (including 417, which was described as a "sensitive" program. I later advised them that its primary purpose was to serve as a weather "scout" for the NRP). Mr. Barfield then described the various DoD-NASA "economy" areas studied by various joint task groups under the guidance of Dr. Foster and Dr. Newell. Generally, only routine questions were asked and answered satisfactorily. The Group did inquire into the booster area and this was discussed briefly.

I then briefed on MOL, preceding that discussion with a few words on the NRO/NRP and the special security measures

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accorded national reconnaissance activities. I advised them that virtually all of the pictures of Russia and much of the SIGINT info in the CIA briefing were products of the NRP (single covert national program, joint DoD-CIA undertaking, under SecDef, managed by Dr. Flax). I pointed out that Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy had imposed extraordinary security measures (to avoid a confrontation with Soviets or embarrassment to our allies, gain tacit recognition, etc.) and we had compartmented the products and operational/technical characteristics of the systems. I stressed that all reconnaissance aspects of MOL (although not technically a part of the NRP) was in a code-named compartment. I stated that there were numerous systems in the NRP, that Dr. Flax would be pleased to brief them at their convenience, that several hours were required, etc.

I then stated that we wished to brief them on MOL which, while like the NRP systems in having a covert mission, was also an acknowledged program and budgeted as an open line item. The charts used are listed in Attachment 2 (all are available in the MOL Program Office).

There were a number of routine questions (asked mostly by Dr. Townes, Dr. Branscomb, and Mr. Puckett). The following are worth noting:

1. Did we have the option initially of going either manned or unmanned? I pointed out that when MOL was first proposed, it was not believed practical to operate the camera in an "automatic" mode; that when the latter became feasible, an unmanned system was included for various reasons (see Chart 7, reproduced as Atch 3); but that the manned system was being developed and would be flown first for valid reasons (see Atch 3). I noted that we had not yet demonstrated the feasibility of automatic pointing and tracking and would not for another 1 - 2 years.

2. Would the manned system be cost-competitive (see Atch 3)? I stated it was my opinion that on a recurring cost basis, despite the inherently longer lifetime of the unmanned system, the manned system would be more than

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cost-competitive (cloud-avoidance; time-sensitive, fleeting targets; color and other film; [REDACTED] visual reconnaissance, etc.). I noted that the "automatic" camera operation was important in the manned system; however, so we would use man's brain-power rather than as a "servo". I noted that we had recently discussed this in DoD and decided to continue the unmanned system as "insurance" against the international objection/foreign threat possibility, etc.

3. Was the NRP and MOL included in the [REDACTED]

This was answered affirmatively (about [REDACTED] for NRP systems and support, \$515 million for MOL; and the remainder for all else).

4. How about advancing space technology and civilian use of advanced camera systems -- my personal thoughts were solicited in this area. I pointed out that this question had been considered almost annually for the past several years (at Cabinet level) and that each time, it had been decided to restrain civilian (NASA) efforts in this regard because of our concern over upsetting the apparent tacit acceptance by the Soviets of U.S. satellite reconnaissance activities. I noted that an appropriate group had studied classified satellite photography and assessed its value for oceanography, geology, transportation, etc., and also that a procedure had been established whereby certain mapping/charting results were released (without revealing the source). I also indicated that there was agreement that there should and would be a gradual relaxation of the constraints on NASA in this area, but that the specifics of how and when had not yet been established.

I repeated to Dr. Townes the offer by Dr. Flax to brief them, if desired, on the NRP systems, and we also offered to brief them further on MOL and other DoD space activities. I cautioned them again about the security surrounding the NRP and the reconnaissance aspects of MOL, and suggested if they desired to include any of this in their report to the President-Elect that they have their Secretariat contact Dr. Flax, General Berg, or myself, and we would assist them administratively.

The Space Task Group could not help but get the impression that the DoD really is applications minded and views space as

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a place rather than a mission -- it was quite clear that the large majority of DoD space dollars is allocated to operational systems development and employment.

I got the impression that the Group is focused more on the civilian than the military space program (the value of space technology to national security other than military application; future goals; organization; coordination between DoD and NASA, etc.). I understand they will meet again after January 1; however, their precise plans were not revealed.

[REDACTED] (SAFSS) later agreed to follow-up on security-statement signatures, arrangements to sign-up members not present, etc.



JAMES T. STEWART
Major General, USAF
Vice Director, MOL Program

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24 December 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL STEWART

SUBJECT: Nixon Staff Task Force on Space Briefing

The following personnel were present during your briefing of the Nixon Staff Task Force on Space:

Dr. Charles Townes
James Van Allen
Charles R. O'Dell
Norman E. Horowitz
Louis M. Branscomb, Jr.
Walter Orr Roberts
Allen E. Puckett
Francis H. Clauser
Spencer H. Eeresford
Samuel Lenhar
Henry Loozis

Mr. George A. Derbyshire was present during the introductions, but left the room prior to the start of the briefing. He will be briefed 25 December 1968 so that he may complete his committee functions. I will provide him appropriate telephone numbers for any assistance they may require at that time.

SIGNED


Captain, USAF
Assistant for Security
Office of Space Systems

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MOL BRIEFING CHARTS

1. MOL Title Chart (A-1)
2. MOL Chronology (B-1)
3. MOL Program Objectives (D-4)
4. Baseline MOL Manned Mode Configuration (F-1)
5. Baseline MOL Unmanned Mode Configuration (F-2)
6. MOL Camera System Schematic (F-4)
7. Why Manned and Unmanned MOL (G-1)
8. MOL Program Schedule (Q-2)

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CHART 7 REPRODUCTION

WHY MANNED & UNMANNED MDL?

*MANNED SYSTEM FIRST:

- o Assurance of Goal...
- o Early Useful Product...
- o Mature Unmanned System Sooner...

*ALSO UNMANNED SYSTEM IF:

- o Threat/Objections to Manned Operations...
- o Unknown Physiological Limitations...
- o Man Not Cost-Competitive...

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Atch 3

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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

24 MAY 1968

Mr. Richard Helms
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dick:

I have seen your May 15th letter to Chip concerning the MOL program. Certainly the scope and significance of this program have made it imperative that we keep all aspects of it under constant review.

Both of the items you suggest be studied have been periodically studied throughout the MOL program. In December of 1967, these subjects were given very careful consideration in preparing the MOL Development Concept Paper and the FY 69 budget.

Within the next several weeks, the Department of Defense must make many important budget decisions. We will be making our FY 69 apportionment, taking into account the budget cuts which Congress is asking the President to incorporate in his FY 69 expenditure plan. To make the appropriate decisions regarding MOL, we are reviewing in detail all of our previous work over the past few years which is pertinent to the value of the type of intelligence to be derived as well as those studies on alternative ways to achieve the desired objective. As a contribution to our examination of this subject, we would appreciate receiving copies of the review cited in paragraph two of the memorandum attached to your letter.

After we make these immediate FY 69 budget apportionment decisions, we will then be in a position to decide on a consistent set of new, longer range studies and will certainly consider your recommendations and your offer to provide participants in such studies.

With reference to the last paragraph of your letter, I want to reiterate that without reservation we have always planned to have the MOL mission tasking and control handled by the current NRP process in full response to the intelligence community. The only additional major factor which we feel will need to be considered at all times is the safety of the MOL crew.

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Sincerely,

Paul

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cc: Mr. Charles Bohlen

GROUP 1 Mr. Charles Zwick

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