

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence 28 November 1956

SUBJECT : Deployment of AQUATONE to Far East

1. On 14 November you sent a memorandum and covering note to General Twining requesting Air Force support in the provision of facilities for AQUATONE Detachment C in Japan. We have now received (28 November) General Twining's reply to your letter. In effect it states that the Air Force is unable to support both AQUATONE and BLACK NIGHT in the Far East and recommends that we hold Detachment C in reserve to use as an augmenting force whenever and wherever the world situation dictates.

2. On 15 November we had our meeting with the President in the course of which you explained our intention of deploying a Detachment to Japan. The President after some discussion agreed that this unit should be based in Japan unless on further consideration the State Department expressed objection to such a location. He made clear by at least two remarks that he was aware that our aircraft possessed a greater capability than the B-57D's available to BLACK NIGHT and that if any choice had to be made AQUATONE should receive a priority. I would interpret this conversation not as a firm order to us to deploy to the Far East but as a permission to do so and I am sure the President was left with the impression that the deployment would be carried out.

3. The more important facts that seem to me to have a decision^{ve} bearing on this issue are the following:

a. The AQUATONE aircraft and associated equipment is superior to that in the hands of BLACK NIGHT in: range, altitude, quality of photography, quantity of photography per mission, and [REDACTED] (which the BLACK NIGHT aircraft do not carry). Thus the U-2 aircraft is safer, can reach targets beyond the range of BLACK NIGHT, can produce more and higher quality photography [REDACTED]. In addition the AQUATONE detachment as soon as operational can begin high [REDACTED] which is an urgently desired form of intelligence and for which no other equipment is available at this time.

b. It will require at least two months to prepare facilities for AQUATONE from the date a firm favorable decision is made. By our enforced indecision earlier in the autumn and by Air Force opposition for

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the last six weeks, we have already postponed the earliest possible operational date to mid-February. Every day's further delay postpones our operational date correspondingly.

c. The AQUATONE C Detachment's staffing and training are complete and its equipment will be complete long before it will be ready for deployment. In other words, it is all bought and paid for. Neither this unit nor its aircraft are required in the European Theater. These resources could not be efficiently utilized there even if we were permitted to operate virtually without restriction. While awaiting deployment the Detachment is helping with further development work at [REDACTED] but essentially this valuable and costly asset is unemployed and will remain so unless and until it moves to the Far East.

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4. Although there are persuasive arguments both for and against the actual initiation of overflights of Communist China during the winter, I hardly need point out that there are overwhelming reasons for deploying the Detachment just as soon as possible so as to have this Government's best capability in place in the Far East in case it is needed. We are in the midst of two major political crises which have given rise to a sharp renewal of tension between East and West. Any situation in Europe or the Middle East that comes close to boiling over carries at least a threat in the Far East. And there is always the possibility of a new crisis arising in that area. Under the circumstances, it would be criminal to keep our reconnaissance capability, developed with such urgency and effort, waiting idle in the U. S. whence it could not be moved without two months' notice, merely because the Air Force desires to protect its BLACK NIGHT project from competition.

5. I believe we have fooled around with this problem long enough and I recommend just as strongly as I can:

a. That a meeting be arranged promptly with General Twining, after careful consideration by you and General Cabell of its composition which should be designed to maximize the chance of frank discussion leading to a favorable outcome.

b. That your position with them be substantially as set forth above, with the one additional element that CIA should offer to finance (in the amount of approximately \$350,000) the cost of preparing facilities for AQUATONE at [REDACTED] (or any other suitable base in Japan).

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c. That if the Air Force will not agree to support AQUATONE in Japan, you invite Secretary Quarles and General Twining to join with you and General Cabell in setting the essential facts before the President and ascertaining his desire.

I would like especially to urge upon you that, before such a meeting, you and General Cabell determine exactly what arguments you will use and whether you are prepared, as here recommended, to take this issue to the top if necessary.

RICHARD M. BISSELL, JR.
Project Director

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