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11 APR 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Effects of Weather on Photographic
Reconnaissance over North Vietnam

1. This memorandum is for the information of the Director of Central Intelligence. It is in answer to the question posed by the Director of Central Intelligence concerning weather conditions over North Vietnam for the next three-month period.

2. To properly evaluate the effect of weather on photographic reconnaissance, it is necessary to differentiate between high-level and low-level reconnaissance. High-level is divided into aircraft/drone and satellite platforms. Low-level includes all tactical aircraft and certain drone configurations. Pertinent operational criteria and associated weather restrictions are presented below.

a. Low-level

(1) Flight path is normally in the lowest 10,000 feet of the atmosphere.

(2) Maneuverability to and from the target area, plus the latitude of variance in acceptable photographic altitudes over the target, result in a high probability of satisfactory weather conditions during any month of the year.

(3) Reaction time is short and utilization of the 417 Meteorological Satellite readout at Saigon presents the user with an excellence of cloud cover data prior to launch.

(4) The primary weather restrictions which could preclude mission success are:

(a) Reduced vertical visibilities due to precipitation, fog or heavy haze/smoke over the target.

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(b) Hazardous flying conditions resulting from low-lying, terrain-obscuring clouds and

(c) Turbulence associated with thunderstorm activity enroute to, from and in the vicinity of the target area.

b. High-level (Aircraft/Drone)

(1) Flight path over target area above 60,000 feet.

(2) Actual flight plan optimizes target coverage over forecast good weather areas.

(3) Flexibility in target selection and route development, based on existing and forecast weather, coupled with a 24/12 hour unit reaction time insures maximum target coverage with each mission.


(4) The primary weather restriction is total cloud cover in excess of 25 percent over the target area. Targets become partially to wholly obscured by clouds and/or shadows when 50 percent or greater total cloud cover exists.

c. High-level (Satellite)

(1) Flight path over target area is above approximately 85 nautical miles.

(2) Orbital characteristics determined by pre-planning based primarily on priority targets to be covered in the USSR. The number of N-S swath cuts through South China and North Vietnam is dependent upon the orbital parameters and the mission length.

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(3) As with high-level (aircraft/drone), the primary weather restriction is total cloud cover over the target area.

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3. The following data indicates the number of days satisfactory weather conditions normally exist for high-level (less than 25 percent total cloud cover) and low-level (no clouds below 2,000 feet) over Hanoi.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
High-level	5	6	6	8	6	1
Low-level	18	16	13	16	19	20
	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
High-level	2	2	5	6	10	8
Low-level	19	18	18	22	23	22

In 1965, weather favorable for high-level reconnaissance over Hanoi occurred four days each in April and May, zero days in June and two days in July.

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ALBERT D. WHEELON
Deputy Director
for
Science and Technology

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Signature is recommended.

[Redacted Signature]

acting Director of Special Activities

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