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Systems Jointly

[redacted] 2758-66  
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23 September 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: [redacted] Assessment of the Present and Future  
[redacted] U-2 Program

1. This memorandum is for information only.

2. At my request, the appropriate divisions of this Directorate have prepared an exhaustive and comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the U-2/TACKLE program in order to assess its viability and future as a productive intelligence collection effort.

3. The conclusions of the group were that the U-2/TACKLE program should be continued; that the program will continue to be a productive intelligence collection device provided the dynamic program of systems and tactics development used over the past four years can be kept intact and current. This summarizes the coordinated views of the Office of Scientific Intelligence, Office of ELINT, and Office of Special Activities.

4. In assessing the feasibility of continued over-flight of China by the U-2, recognizing the constantly improving defensive capabilities of that country, the evaluation has been limited to the surface-to-air missile threat which is currently our primary concern. The fighter-interceptor threat has not, as yet, emerged as a significant deterrent to the continuation of the TACKLE program.

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5. It should be noted that while the study addressed itself specifically to the present U-2 configuration and associated systems, the philosophy and recommendations apply, almost without exception, to the proposed U-2R capability and may be so projected.

6. While the conclusions of the evaluating committee were essentially optimistic with regard to the viability of the program, the inherent risk in overflight is such that we obviously must expect some future losses. The objective is, of course, to keep the risks at an acceptable level. In this context, it was concluded, based on review and supported by data derived from the tests accomplished at General Dynamics, that the systems and tactics employed in the past significantly contributed to the safe return of the aircraft. However, the degree to which they have been effective was not determinable from available evidence.

7. During the deliberations of the committee, it became apparent that the inadequacy of onboard monitoring and recording equipment, coupled with a lack of full exploitation of collateral sources of information on the CHICOM defense environment, has to some extent deprived us of the best available information which could be applied to the solution of this problem.

8. In accordance with the recommendations of the committee, certain actions concerning improvement of mission planning procedures, operational tactics, and countermeasures equipment have already been implemented and are now in being.

9. Beyond those measures which could readily be undertaken by the operations and development personnel without policy sanction at higher level, I have approved

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the following committee recommendations:

a. That we assign the highest possible priority to development and procurement of the System XVIII concept. This would replace the now inadequate System VI ELINT collection device and provide a certain amount of real time threat assessment, which is mandatory.

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b. That appropriate and knowledgeable Agency personnel visit the [redacted] site to conduct briefings, investigate available equipment, recommend supplemental equipment and, generally, to contribute to the improvement of future intercept operations.

10. In addition, I have approved for implementation certain other recommendations of the committee which are of lesser significance but which, across the board, should contribute materially to the program's continuing value as a source of critical intelligence on the CHICOM military and economic posture.

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[redacted]

ALBERT D. WHEELON  
Deputy Director  
for  
Science and Technology

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