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5 May 1967

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SUBJECT: Comparison of the Capabilities, Performance, Countermeasures Systems and Operational Status of the A-12 and SR-71

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to show the contrast between the capabilities, performance, countermeasures systems, and operational status of the CIA A-12 and USAF SR-71 aircraft.

2. General:

a. The A-12 is a single seat (one pilot) reconnaissance aircraft designed for high altitude, high speed covert reconnaissance by the CIA of denied territory during peacetime.

b. The SR-71 is a two place (one pilot and a Reconnaissance Systems Operator), high speed, high altitude reconnaissance aircraft designed primarily for military post-strike reconnaissance of selected targets as part of the SAC EWP (Emergency War Plan.)

c. The SR-71, fully loaded with fuel at 136,700 lbs., is approximately 12,000 lbs. heavier than the A-12. About 9,000 lbs. of this excess is fuel.

3. Capabilities:

a. The A-12 is designed to utilize as options, [Redacted]

[Redacted] high resolution cameras [Redacted]

The highest resolution camera provides a sixty-three (63) n. m. wide continuous swath of one-foot resolution.

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high resolution photography is one-foot resolution but it is in two separated five-mile swath width strips. These five-mile strips may be positioned up to 19.5 miles on either side of the aircraft.

c. The basic reason for the difference in capability of the SR-71 and A-12 is a design function. The A-12 was designed to operate against selected peacetime targets to obtain [REDACTED] intelligence. The selected equipment option could and is, therefore, optimized. The SR-71 was designed primarily for post-strike reconnaissance with emphasis on multi-sensor collection.

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4. Performance:

a. The A-12 has repeatedly demonstrated, in flights in the U.S., an operational mission profile at Mach 3.1 cruise speed at an altitude up to [REDACTED] with an unrefueled range of [REDACTED] dependent upon fuel reserves. Statistically, the A-12, as of 30 April 1967, has accumulated 703 sorties (414 hours) at Mach 3 cruise speed of which 84% (350 hours) was accumulated on operational aircraft. Mach 3 speed has been maintained for [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Mach 3.2 for [REDACTED] interrupted only by the brief interspersing of required aerial refuelings. Twenty-five sorties have been flown involving three or more aerial refuelings. Over a nine-month carefully rated period during the operational validation testing, all systems operated satisfactorily on 87% of sorties flown. This performance rate compares most favorably with the demonstrated capabilities of USAF high-performance aircraft (such as the B-58) in a similar operational period.

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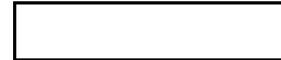
b. The data concerning the SR-71 flight experience to date is not available to us. However, eventually the ranges of the A-12

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and SR-71 may be comparable, but because of gross weight differences, the A-12 normally will be able to fly at 3,000 to 4,000 feet higher altitude which somewhat reduces its vulnerability.

5. Electronic Countermeasures System:

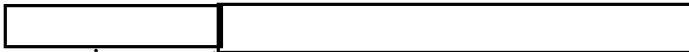


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b. A special ECM system designed specifically for the SR-71 is under development and it is our understanding that the Initial Operational Capability date is approximately one year. The Air Force, however, has an option to install an interim ECM system of lesser sophistication before that date.

6. Operational Status:

a. The A-12 program at the present time has six operationally ready Mach 3+ aircraft with complete tanker rendezvous equipment, seven high resolution cameras and seven sets of sophisticated electronic countermeasures systems. This proven capability has been available since December 1965. Two contingency operational plans, practiced and tested, have been formulated to provide both Cuban and Southeast Asian reconnaissance contingency coverage by the A-12. A constant state of readiness is being maintained at

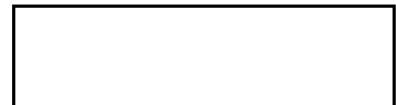


for either or both of these

requirements.

b. The USAF is estimating that the SR-71 will be operationally ready in July 1967 to provide a contingency capability for Cuban coverage, if required, and Southeast Asia by December 1967. We do not have sufficient information to either question or affirm the validity of this estimate. Currently, the USAF SR-71 purposefully is doing a minimum of flying above Mach 3 due, we believe, to some fuel tank sealant problems. However, the program is being geared to get the entire system ready to assume the contingency capabilities noted above.

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