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11 April 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Special Security Center/OS

SUBJECT : Access Approval and Certification Authority of Program Directors

1. The paragraph concerning the authorization to 'grant CORONA clearances to properly clearable persons' represents a proposed new approach on the part of the NRO under which all contracts concerning CORONA, [redacted] and [redacted] will contain a similar clause designed to insure that the Air Force may approve access to these projects. The identity of SPD and Payload Sub-Assembly Project Office is, therefore, irrelevant to the larger problem with which you are faced, i. e. , is it permissible for the DCI to delegate the authority to grant clearances involving CIA participation in unvouchered black contract activities. Stated in another way can the Air Force grant such access approval and certify our people without obtaining prior approval from this Agency. The answer to this question will, of course, require a legal opinion from the Office of the General Counsel as well as a security determination.

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2. I think you should be aware of the historical background on this question. Several years ago, at a time when the Air Force was attempting to take over the entire program, only two obstacles prevented them from reaching this goal. One was the black contracting authority and the other was the security approval and certification authority - both of which were retained by this Agency. With this history in mind, you can see where strong feelings might exist against giving up this authority.

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