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September 19, 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting on September 19 in [redacted] Office with Mr. Walter Wilcox and Mr. J. D. Cordero of the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA)

1. First, a few words of background on OTA. The office is about two years old and has a staff of about 100. It is the technology equivalent of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and is designed to provide members of Congress and their staffs with technological data and developments on a broad range of subjects--food production and forecasting, for example. OTA has a 12-man advisory council which thus far has not done much advising. It consists of ten prominent non-government advisors (such as the president of Cal Tech) and CRS head Lester Jayson and GAO chief Staats. In the Congress itself, there is the OTA Board consisting of 6 Senators and 6 Representatives equally divided between Democrats and Republicans.

2. Cordero is responsible for food management matters in OTA and is Sen. Humphrey's man. Cordero formerly worked for AID. Wilcox is a retired CRS agricultural economist who is now a consultant with OTA. He did most of the talking for the OTA side, and it was obvious that he has considerable expertise. Both men were pleasant, attentive, and seemed satisfied with the session.

3. They were interested in the information interplay between CIA and USDA. [redacted] assured them that since early 1973 USDA has been and is being well-fed by the Agency. On the other hand, we do not always get all the information that we would like from USDA. This is due primarily to USDA's role in protecting the US farmer and grain seller.

4. There was also some discussion in very general terms of CIA sources on crop production, particularly in the USSR and PRC. In the latter case, [redacted] PRC expert pointed out that

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STAT [redacted] the nature of Chinese agriculture is such that it is hard for [redacted] The OTAers were also told that we are constantly striving to improve our own technology in this area, and that the Agency uses ERTS data, too.

5. Cordero noted that the OTA Board, with Sen. Humphrey in the chair, will hold two days of hearings the week of September 22 to gauge the progress that had been made since 1972 on improving US information on food production. Another two day's worth of hearings will be held in October. [redacted] warned the OTAers that if they wanted the USDA witnesses to discuss any CIA technology and other sensitive sources being used that an executive session would be necessary. Cordero thought that that would be a good idea, but that it could wait until the October hearings. STAT

6. The meeting went smoothly and I did not detect any rough patches or potential problems for the Agency. [redacted] STAT  
STAT [redacted] and one other member of [redacted] staff, whose name escaped me, also sat in on the session. STAT

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STAT cc: ✓ OLC [redacted]