

C. Overhead Reconnaissance Comes of Age

59. The most significant and important changes in the activities of USIB under Mr. McCone occurred as a result of the successful development and operational use of overhead reconnaissance by satellite as well as aircraft for photographic and to a lesser extent SIGINT and other collection of highest priority intelligence. This combination of TALENT/KEYHOLE resources was able to provide factual information unavailable from any other sources on such vital subjects as military capabilities, operations, weapons systems and tests, particularly in the critical missile field. It also enhanced the value and interpretation of intelligence from other sources, and constituted a firmer base for appraising or estimating military policies, intentions, programs, resources and developments as well as those in related political and economic matters. In other words, this overhead reconnaissance program brought a whole new dimension to the national intelligence effort and had a profound effect on practically all of the work of USIB. Its impact was reflected on the Board's agenda in the Watch Committee reports, the National Intelligence Estimates, most of the

reports and activities of USIB Committees, and miscellaneous ad hoc studies, reports, briefings and discussions.

60. John McCone in effect used the USIB on essentially a weekly basis\* as a forum to provide continuing guidance on intelligence requirements and priorities for this National Reconnaissance Program. Under the agreement of 2 May 1962 between the Secretary of Defense and the DCI regarding this program, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) was to be responsive solely to such USIB intelligence guidance. In September 1963, Mr. McCone advised USIB that, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Defense, the Director of NRO would meet with the Board whenever matters of mutual concern were on the agenda, normally as the first items. Similarly NRO was to participate in appropriate COMOR deliberations. The USIB concurred in these arrangements. 131/

61. In accordance with Board instructions 132/, the Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance prepared for USIB consideration most of the reports providing intelligence guidance to the NRO, although the CCPC and GMAIC included such guidance in many of their reports to the Board. In

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\*USIB actions related to COMOR reports during the two-year period under review averaged more than one per week.

addition to its reports which required USIB consideration, however, COMOR was also authorized to provide directly to NRO intelligence guidance for specific operational missions in terms of targets, priorities, and frequency and types of coverage required. NRO integrated this intelligence guidance with its own operational and research and development needs in the conduct of the missions.

62. During the period under review the guidance provided to NRO by USIB with the assistance of COMOR consisted largely of statements on intelligence requirements and priorities by subject, area or type of coverage. Guidance on collection operational factors such as frequency and priority of scheduling various types of missions needed, and of developing new or modified operational capabilities were also furnished to NRO on a frequent basis. In addition the USIB considered and acted upon many problems concerning the necessity for protecting the highly compartmented security of this program, and for downgrading and dissemination of the T/KH material acquired, including dissemination to selected foreign governments.

TOP SECRET  
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63. The greatest number of USIB actions providing requirements guidance to NRO during this period stemmed from the Cuban crisis of October 1962 (discussed in the following Section D). Overhead reconnaissance of Cuba, primarily by U-2, had been conducted largely on a mission-by-mission authorization for sometime prior to the Soviet arms buildup in Cuba which lead to this crisis. On 6 October however, at the request of the Director of NRO, COMOR submitted to USIB a statement of "Intelligence Justification and Requirements for Overflight of Cuba". This report stressed the pressing and continuing need for up-to-date intelligence on the Soviet arms buildup to assist the very highest level of government in making policy decisions of immediate and vital concern to the nation . The items of most immediate concern were the missile installations springing up all over the island. In addition the confirmed presence of MIG-21 aircraft required confirmation of the estimated numbers involved. Finally with this buildup, the possibility of U. S. operations in the area required intelligence to enable responsible commanders and organizations to prepare for such events, although this was preceding secondary to the / requirements. COMOR therefore stated

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TOP SECRET  
Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

photographic requirements in four groups by type of coverage and vehicle, frequency and objectives: Group I was a search for new targets or to confirm/negate collateral reports by satellite U-2 and oblique photography on a one-time basis for listed objectives; Group II covered operational targets, order of battle and surveillance by U-2, FIRE FLY drones and oblique of with monthly coverage/listed objectives; Group III involved the same type of coverage and vehicles as Group II but on a weekly basis for other listed objectives; and Group IV gave technical intelligence requirements by low-level tactical reconnaissance for aircraft on a one-time basis / certain objectives. SIGINT requirements by overhead reconnaissance were also stated regarding the Soviet-furnished air defense buildup involving radar missile systems, air order of battle and anti-aircraft. The USIB on 10 October agreed that the Chairman should express to the Special Group that the targets in Groups II and III should be surveyed as promptly as possible, and that COMOR should submit for Board consideration a specific list of priority targets in Group IV. 133/ The COMOR response justifying the need for low-altitude reconnaissance and giving the target categories in priority order, ending / in a recommendation

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3  
TOP SECRET

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

for low-altitude reconnaissance at the earliest possible opportunity, was considered by USIB on 17 October. The Board's action was to authorize and direct COMOR to keep these requirements, targets and priorities up-to-date, and to keep USIB members, NRO and appropriate operational authorities currently informed. 134/ Following the 17 October meeting, USIB met daily at 0830 for the next five days to provide intelligence support to the NSC Executive Committee in dealing with the Cuban crisis, as described in the following Section D. After the dismantling of the MBRM/IRBM sites in Cuba and the removal of most of the missile equipment from Cuba, COMOR submitted a report reviewing the immediate and continuing intelligence needs and recommended an appropriate program for photographic reconnaissance of Cuba. The requirements susceptible of satisfaction by reconnaissance were identified as continuous knowledge of the deployment and operational status of significant weapons systems already known to be in Cuba, and detection of any new weapons systems brought into Cuban ports and deployed throughout the island. In terms of collection means, the requirement was divided into four categories: (a) periodic surveillance <sup>of</sup> known installations, largely by U-2s supplemented at intervals by low-level tactical coverage;

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

TOP SECRET

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

(b) shipping reconnaissance with high-altitude surveillance of ports and with both high and low-altitude aircraft while ships are in port; (c) special coverage of specific, selected objectives such as military installations and weapons by both high and low-level aircraft, and (d) search for new installations and weapons and their location by periodic U-2 coverage. USIB on 21 November approved this COMOR program with one amendment. 135/ On 5 December USIB, based on a statement by the Chairman regarding the intelligence needs of the NSC Executive Committee with respect to Cuba, approved a response stating a reasonable program for photographic reconnaissance of Cuba called <sup>for</sup> high-level coverage of approximately 20 high-priority targets once a week and surveillance of all priority targets at least twice a month. It also stated that low-level photography would be needed when high-level or other intelligence sources revealed suspicious activity, when weather precluded high-level coverage, or if high-level photography could not be secured soon after arrival of large hatch freighters in port. 136/ At its 12 December 1962 meeting USIB approved a statement of collection requirements for reconnaissance of Cuba by the

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Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

- 93 -  
TOP SECRET

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

LIGHTNING BUG drone which had just been developed with an interchangeable nose for SIGINT or photography. In this case the effort was to obtain critical information on the operation and capabilities of the Soviet SA-2 system deployed in Cuba under conditions of an actual missile/target engagement. The requirements were to be satisfied primarily by ELINT collected by the drone providing answers to a list of questions, while other questions were to be answered by SIGINT and other collection facilities supporting the LIGHTNINGBUG operation. 137/

64. USIB actions regarding overhead reconnaissance of Cuba during the remainder of this period from January to November 1963 were concerned primarily with the frequency and type of coverage required to provide any information on the introduction into Cuba of offensive weapons (MBRMS, IRBM and bombers) or the release from concealment of such equipment and its deployment, with a continuing requirement to investigate suspected actual and/military activities associated with such weapons and nuclear energy activities. In February the USIB approved a COMOR report prepared at the request of the Special Group for a comprehensive study of low-level reconnaissance of Cuba. This report recommended that high-level photography be supplemented by low-level and, where required, night photography of Soviet

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

personnel and equipment and certain unidentified installations. 138/

Again in March USIB considered a COMOR review of that previous report and noted a statement by the Chairman that, while he had not pressed for authorization of low-level flights because of certain negotiations, he was prepared to request approval by the Special Group without much further delay.

Mr. McCone did not believe there was much difficulty as to the relative priority for coverage of Soviet military camps (as favored by CIA) and unidentified installations (as favored by DIA and the Joint Staff). The Board concurred in the Chairman's request for approval by the Special Group of low-level reconnaissance of Cuba. He also requested COMOR to prepare a new paper on this subject, which USIB concurred should be provided to the DCI for use at a Special Group meeting. 139/

Late in April Mr. McCone again stated his view that the intelligence community could not meet its intelligence responsibility on Cuba without low-level coverage, while noting that authorization for such coverage had still been deferred pending completion of the Donovan negotiations. The USIB then reaffirmed another statement of priority intelligence requirements for low-level reconnaissance and noted that the Chairman would resubmit them to the Special Group 140/ In this case General Carter at the 2 May USIB meeting advised that higher authority had specified

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

selection of three targets for low-level coverage. The three targets selected were a large Soviet military camp, an unidentified military installation, and a unidentified underground installation, which would be submitted to the Special Group. 141/ In mid-June USIB approved a COMOR report which recommended that, in view of the limited results of high-level coverage of certain key targets during recent months as compared with the results of the June low-level flights, approval be <sup>granted</sup> / for low-level coverage of four targets. 142/ In July USIB approved as amended an updated list by COMOR of recommended targets for low-level reconnaissance which was circulated for information and ready reference. 143/

65. While these efforts were being made to obtain low-level coverage, USIB also was taking actions to assure an adequate level and type of high-level reconnaissance of Cuba. In April COMOR proposed a revised statement of guidance for high-level coverage. The committee expressed its concern about the effects of the existing guidance for U-2 coverage in that it was (a) imprecise in terms of current needs and its effect on operations, (b) produced coverage with a frequency out of proportion to actual changes <sup>amount of</sup> and their significance, and (c) the/film collected had deleterious effects on the management

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

TOP SECRET

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

of photo interpreter resources. While recognizing that political considerations apart from intelligence requirements might affect the frequency of missions, COMOR believed that they should not be allowed to enter into its judgement to confuse or obscure real intelligence requirements. After defining the current requirements problems, COMOR recommended that high-level reconnaissance be conducted under the following formula: (a) entire coverage of Cuba every 14 days, insuring coverage of the highest priority targets (about 30), (b) areas and objectives not adequately covered would take precedence for the next time period, (c) specific coverage of critical targets when warranted and (d) coverage of the whole territory accomplished so as to maximize achievement with the fewest missions. After considering this report however USIB agreed that its existing requirement for weekly coverage of Cuba (weather permitting) remained valid, rather than coverage every 14 days as recommended by COMOR. The Board also noted that the Chairman would consult with the Secretary of Defense to determine if he still had a requirement for daily high-level coverage of major military encampments. 144/ In May DIA reported to the Board that, after consulting with the Secretary of Defense concerning the

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Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

TOP SECRET

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

requirement for daily coverage of major military encampments, he had agreed that weekly coverage as specified by USIB would be acceptable. 145 / In July the Board again considered a COMOR report on this subject in response to a recommendation by the Strategic Air Command that, in few of the current bad weather over Cuba, total coverage each week be changed to coverage of top priority targets weekly with complete coverage scheduled when weather was favorable. USIB approved the following revision of COMOR recommendations that: (a) the requirement for complete high-level coverage weekly be reconfirmed, (b) in view of the adverse weather conditions, SAC be advised to make maximum utilization of favorable weather with the objective of providing, as a minimum, coverage of highest priority targets every 7 days, with complete coverage as feasible, (c) COMOR be requested to report every two weeks on the coverage obtained under this guidance. 146 / The Board, after considering the first biweekly COMOR report, noted the Chairman's statement that SAC had done a good job in taking advantage of favorable weather and he hoped it would continue to do so. In September 1963 USIB considered a COMOR report which was based on a review by an ad hoc interdepartmental committee

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

TOP SECRET

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

of the status of Soviet forces in Cuba, which concluded that these forces were in a state of transition and continuing reduction, that Soviet weapons were being transferred to Cuban control and that there was <sup>no</sup> verifiable evidence of the retention or reintroduction of strategic missiles or IL-28 bombers since those weapons were withdrawn from Cuba in the Fall of 1962. This time USIB, based on this study, approved COMOR recommendations for high-level coverage which were identical with those submitted by the Committee the previous April but rejected by the Board at that time. This action therefore extended the requirement for high-level coverage of the entire territory of Cuba (insuring coverage of the highest priority targets) from the previous period of every 7 days to every 14 days. This USIB action however was subject to the DCI obtaining concurrence of higher authority prior to putting it into effect. Mr. James Reber as Chairman of COMOR assured the Board that the Committee would maintain a close review of the effects of this change and report as required to USIB. 147/ Subsequently the DCI advised USIB that the President had approved this revised formula for high-level coverage of Cuba every 14 days. 148/ The last USIB action during the period under review concerning requirements for

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Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

high-level coverage of Cuba involved a special request in October for such coverage of the entire area as soon as possible, for use in the preparation of a SNIE on the "Consequences to Cuba of Hurricane Flora". 149 / This detailed account of the necessity for USIB to obtain approval by higher authority for the frequency of high-level coverage and of the reluctance of the Special Group to authorize low-level coverage illustrates clearly the serious concern of the President and the NSC to preclude the development of another crisis situation with respect to Cuba.

66. Second to Cuba, the Far East was the area most frequently the subject of USIB actions dealing with requirements for overhead reconnaissance during the period under review. Communist China was the principal target, although Southeast Asia and the Sino-Indian border were also considered. In December 1961, a

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Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

TOP SECRET

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Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3

Next 43 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2004/12/20 : CIA-RDP79M00098A000200060001-3