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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of National Estimates

SUBJECT: Response to Request for Views
on Soviet Manned Lunar Landing Intentions

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1. Information which has become available since the preparation of NIE 11-1-65 has been examined and old information reevaluated in terms of the question of the existence of a Soviet manned lunar landing program competitive with Project Apollo. We have concluded that this information is generally consistent with the considerations given and conclusions reached in the estimate.

2. In summary, these conclusions state that Soviet intent to land men on the moon sometime in the future seems certain (para. 59). It is not possible on the basis of technological considerations to rule out entirely a possible Soviet attempt to do this in the 1968-1969 period (para. 60). We do not believe, however, that a manned lunar landing competitive with the present Apollo schedule, i. e., aimed at the 1968-1969 period, is a Soviet objective (para. I).

3. The principal specific gain which might be made by the Soviets in beating the United States to the moon would, of course, be one of prestige and the significant enhancement of the technological and military image of the Soviet Union in the world at large. A competitive lunar program also has the advantage of providing a focus and animus for rapid and extensive technological development. The effects of this development will be widespread and ultimately involve many sectors of the economy. We are not best equipped to consider Soviet need for this sort of pump priming.

4. The development of Complex J at Tyuratam appears to have given the Soviets a facilities base for the development of a booster capable of supporting a manned lunar landing. Construction

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visible at this area still does not provide, however, unequivocal indication of the size of the booster for which it may be intended. The development of the complex in the period since the preparation of the estimate has strengthened our belief that it will function as the point of final assembly and static testing of launch hardware. Presumably, the static test facilities will also be used as launch pads. The estimated date of full completion of the large building at Complex J has not changed substantially from that of mid-1966 as given in the estimate. If assembly and static testing of a very large booster are to occur subsequent to this date, the first flight test is not likely to occur before 1968, as the estimate now states. If a prototype has been built and static tested elsewhere in the USSR, for which there is no evidence, a first flight test might occur by mid-1967. The earliest possible date of mid-1966 given in Table I should probably be moved to the 1st quarter of 1967 and the probable date to the start of 1968. Manned flight test dates should be slipped at least one quarter.

5. The technological requirements associated with the full development of a very large launch vehicle suitable for a manned lunar landing mission are such as to make it unlikely that a sudden allocation of greatly enhanced resources to the project can have substantial effect within the next few years. The estimated date for a first flight test in 1968 assumes adequate manning and full support of this effort. If projected development time extends beyond this period to any great extent, however, it may well be shortened to this limiting period through the adoption of a more intensive program involving greater allocations of men and materiel.

6. It appears most likely that the Soviets will utilize an earth orbital rendezvous mode in attempting a manned lunar landing and that this may be undertaken as an extension of earth orbital operations. The conclusion reached in the estimate that the Soviets will probably engage in an extensive manned space

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station program during this decade has been given support by continuing Soviet statements in this tenor and by the characteristics of recent Soviet manned flights which appear best related to the development of a capability for prolonged earth orbital operations. We continue to believe that the Proton-1 booster will be utilized for the early establishment of a small space station. This could occur in 1966 without actually man-rating the booster if a rendezvous and docking capability is added to the Voskhod spacecraft. These developments suggest that the Soviets will rely upon an earth orbital rendezvous mode for any manned lunar landing attempt, possibly as a step integrated in this program of extensive earth orbital operations.

7. If the Soviets have not chosen to "race" to the moon, we expect that they will endeavor to soften the impact of a successful Apollo mission by the achievement of other goals of their own choosing. They have openly questioned the scientific significance and necessity of a manned lunar landing and will probably substitute goals to which they can attribute greater meaning. Extensive earth orbital operations and the establishment of a system of major space stations in a period when the United States cannot follow a comparable program because of its commitment to Apollo would enable the Soviets to run their own race and limit the effects of a successful landing on the moon by the United States. A vigorous Soviet program of instrumented lunar exploration is also indicated by Soviet statements which emphasize the necessity for extensive activity of this type prior to any attempts at a manned landing. An early Soviet manned circumlunar flight is considered in the estimate as an additional mission aimed at offsetting the effects of a successful Apollo mission and reinforcing the association of the Soviet Union with the early exploration of the moon. We still have no firm evidence of the existence of such a program but consider it to be a possibility warranting consideration. The time estimate given in NIE 11-1-65 still appears valid.

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8. No specific indications exist as to Soviet projects following a manned lunar landing though the stated objective of exploring all the closer planets has been maintained. The Soviets have additionally stated their intention to establish a lunar base subsequent to manned lunar

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landing but no significant details or meaningful timetables have been revealed. If Soviet manned lunar landing is undertaken as a follow-on to extensive earth orbital operations and instrumented exploration of the moon, it is likely that they will enjoy some advantages in the establishment of a lunar base. Such an approach would allow for the concurrent development of the technology of lunar transportation and that of maintaining man in space for extended periods. It is possible that a late lunar landing may be followed fairly rapidly by the establishment of a Soviet base on the moon.

9. In conclusion, it must be stated that while we continue to support the estimate that the Soviets probably do not intend to attempt a manned lunar landing in the 1968-1969 period, we expect them to pursue a vigorous and expanding space program generally competitive with that of the United States. In making this effort, the Soviets will establish their own goals in space and make the most of their accomplishments in enhancing the prestige of the USSR relative to that of the United States in space exploration.

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DONALD F. CHAMBERLAIN
Director of Scientific Intelligence

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