

31 March 1966

TO: Sherman Kent

J.J. Hitchcock is overseeing the preparation of a briefing the Director is to give the President on the OXCART matter. A part of the briefing is to be "reactions," and J.J. wanted to use SNIE 10-2-66, but in "gisted" form.

25X1 After a short discussion with some of the Board and with [redacted] and on the theory that the gisting of a very short USIB-approved document (particularly on a controversial topic) should not be taken lightly, I have merely broken the paper down in outline form leaving in virtually every point made by the SNIE. 25X1 The only major departure is the addition of a section [redacted] [redacted] which J.J. requested. 25X1

I am passing this on to J.J. with the admonition that any further tinkering should be cleared with us.

[redacted] 25X1

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Principal reactions in Communist and non-Communist countries to reconnaissance over China and North Vietnam by OXCART vehicles, based in Okinawa. Taken from SNIE 10-2-66, 17 March 1966.

I. China

- A. Chinese would quickly acquire knowledge of operation, and identify it with new and advanced aircraft announced by President in 1964. Likely Chinese would quickly relate overflights to base at Kadena.
- B. Assuming failure to destroy aircraft, Chinese would probably remain silent as they have done with successful U-2 overflights. In this contingency, Chinese pressure on Japan or any other cooperating country would be slight.
- C. If aircraft came down in China, however, a major political and propaganda campaign would ensue. Peking would hope to persuade world of Chinese strength and of "reckless aggressiveness" of US policy, and would try to mobilize public opinion in Japan and Okinawa against US control of latter island and against US bases in Japan.
- D. Chinese reactions would be related to presence of large US ground forces in South Vietnam, and apprehensions regarding possibility of US attack on China itself. Although Chinese may fear series of actions and reactions in Vietnam which would lead in time to Sino-US war, they probably do not expect it at early date. These apprehensions may grow or diminish between now and time overflights begin.
- E. There is some chance Peking would conclude US, in using advanced system at this time, was seeking target intelligence which it meant to use at an early date. This chance would be greater if program began intensively, or if it coincided with a major expansion of US air attacks on North Vietnam.*

* USIB members from State Department and NSA believe following should be inserted at this point: "In any case the US employment of such a sophisticated reconnaissance vehicle would tend to increase Chinese fears that the US was expecting an eventual escalation of the Vietnam conflict into open conflict with China."



- F. On the other hand, Chinese have become accustomed to frequent probes of their air space and are aware that improvements in their defenses have increased vulnerability of older systems. We conclude, therefore, that, barring special circumstances mentioned above, Chinese would regard this vehicle as another stage in US collection program with no special significance of broader US intentions, and that they would not take any drastic new military action.

II. North Vietnam

The DRV, already under heavy US air attack and reconnaissance, would attach little extra significance to OXCART operations.

III. USSR

- A. Through a variety of intelligence sources, Soviets would quickly acquire a fairly complete picture of operations. They would probably reinforce any Chinese or North Vietnamese propaganda built around a downing of an aircraft.
- B. Their primary concern would be to forestall use of the aircraft over Soviet territory. They might make private representation to the US stressing seriousness with which they would view any intrusions over USSR, but they almost certainly not make US overflights of China the occasion of a major crisis in US-Soviet relations.

IV. Japan

- A. The aircraft's presence on Okinawa would soon become known and might be vigorously publicized in Japanese newspapers. Japanese leftists would try to make an issue of it, probably portraying the aircraft as a nuclear-capable weapon, and they probably would try to raise fears of Japanese involvement in Vietnam war or in actions against Communist China.
- B. Sato, assuming operation did not come as complete surprise to him, could probably deal with situation and not object to continuance of operation.

- C. If an aircraft came down in China and the Chinese extensively publicized the event, difficulties for Japanese government would be greater. Sato would still probably weather the storm, though he might have to ask the US to discontinue the program from Okinawa.

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VI. Other Non-Communist Reactions

- A. Some elements would try to make an issue of OXCART deployment, especially if an aircraft came down in China, and there would be pressure on the President to discontinue the operation lest it increase the risk of Chinese Communist overt intervention in the Vietnam war.
- B. However, in our opinion nothing approaching the outcry over the U-2 affair in 1960 would ensue. Most governments would ignore or play down the matter and adverse reactions and pressures are unlikely to be very powerful.

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