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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

6 OCT 1964

Honorable Eugene G. Fubini  
Assistant Secretary of Defense  
(Deputy Director, Research and Engineering)  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Gene:

This letter is in reference to yours of September 11th, which discusses at some considerable length the development of a reseau capability in our CORONA camera. I am informed that this subject was raised at the NRO Executive Committee meeting on September 29 by proposal that contracts be let to modify the CORONA to accommodate a Stellar Index camera.

As you and I have discussed, the mapping program of the Department of Defense is both of vital importance and extremely expensive. Hence, it is obvious that if by the use of a Stellar Index camera the CORONA photography produced can be made useful for mapping purposes, not only would economies result, but our inventory of information essential to the preparation of useful maps would be greatly increased. I therefore feel it would be useful to explore every possible means of utilizing satellite photographic reconnaissance to supplement our mapping effort.

I have two concerns about utilizing the CORONA satellite for this purpose. They are the following: OSD review completed.

In your letter you refer to the priority we have given to reconnaissance in our overhead program. This we must continue and recent developments in the Soviet Union observed through photographic reconnaissance, i. e., the single silo ICBM launchers and the unexplained developments in Soviet Air Defense Systems must be kept under constant surveillance. Moreover, the fact that the single silo complexes are appearing in locations removed from railroad facilities requires a careful and repetitive aerial photographic survey of all of the Soviet Union. Only yesterday General LeMay expressed to me his very deep concern over the possible existence of undetected single silo ICBM's

25X1 NRO review(s) completed.

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and he stated that his feeling that the extent of the search of the Soviet Union was inadequate had given him serious misgivings concerning the accuracy of our current estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities. While I do not personally share General LeMay's misgivings as I hold a high degree of confidence in our current estimates, nevertheless, the fact that he so expressed himself indicates the need for continuing a dynamic satellite photographic reconnaissance program directed exclusively towards the gathering of intelligence on the strategic threat to the United States. Therefore, if the Stellar Index camera is to be incorporated into the CORONA payload and proves useful for mapping purposes, the mapping mission must at no time take precedence over the intelligence mission or compete with the intelligence mission for funds, available launchers and payloads.

Secondly, it is my understanding that the incorporation of the Stellar Index camera requires extensive modification to the CORONA and adds significantly to the complexity of an already complex system. The NRO has admirably overcome the difficulties with the CORONA which led to a succession of failures in the first half of this year. Intelligence needs cannot permit a repetition of this experience which might be the consequence of a drastic modification. Therefore any decision involving the introduction of a Stellar Index camera must, in my opinion, be accomplished as a research and development project, using a vehicle and payload outside of the CORONA coverage needs to meet the established USIB requirements for intelligence collection, as well as the established standby requirements.

Once the system is proven, which I assume will require three or four launchings, the camera could be incorporated into the CORONA program, assuming that doing so would produce information useful for mapping in areas confined to the geography of particular interest from an intelligence collection viewpoint.

I would be pleased to discuss this matter further with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

John A. McCone  
Director

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Drafted by DCI:JAM:mcm  
Minor revisions and final form: DDCI:MSC:blh

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