TOP SECRET

October 3, 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

The following met with the President today to discuss a special reconnaissance project -- Secretary Dulles, General Cabell, Mr. Bissell, Admiral Radford, Colonel Goodpaster.

The President said he had become discouraged regarding the project principally because, whereas he had understood there would be a good chance of not being discovered on most, if not all, operations, just the opposite had proved true. An evaluation he had seen did not take up the question of world opinion. He recalled great efforts for many years we have been making to create an opinion in the world that we are not truculent and do not want war. To the world, these operations seem provocative and unjustified as violating sovereignty.

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Mr. Dulles said he did not dissent from the President's comment. He thought if we could get really important results by a crash operation of a week or ten days we might consider the matter further, but he questioned how permanently valuable the results would be. Assuming there will be no war (which seems correct, although we can never be sure) it would seem that the information would become obsolete if operations were not followed up. He did not think that we could afford to go on indefinitely taking the propaganda impact that has occurred.

General Cabell said the results would have validity longer than the Secretary might imply. A good datum of geographic and man-made features as well as deployments would be established. In addition, we might learn of things that we do not now know exist.

The President said a Russian can now buy an air ticket in New York and learn about our whole country. He questioned whether they would lay a complaint before the United Nations, although they might speak about it. Secretary Dulles thought it was possible they might make a complaint to the U N regarding "aggression," i.e., violation of their frontiers.

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Admiral Radford said he did not disagree as to the seriousness of the question. He pointed out the need for intelligence to make our estimates better. With the great arguments that are going on regarding military programs, firmer intelligence would be of great value. The President said the question is one of the great price to be paid which may be too big for the intelligence we would get, much as he valued it.

In response to a question by Secretary Dulles, Admiral Radford indicated the Services are developing the B-57D as a standard high-performance reconnaissance aircraft which would fly at 64,000 feet, and be used in the Far East.

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The President said that knowledge of operations of this type would stir the world and stir our own people. He recalled the care taken to avoid attribution. Secretary Dulles said it is hard to see what we could say if called to account in general terms -- last time one of the specifics gave an out. The President said he was ready to take up the question of operations in the Far East. [redacted] The President recalled he had agreed that operations could be conducted along the borders in the Middle East to see if radar operates, and if it shouldn't further extensions could be considered. Mr. Bissell thought the Afghan border might not have radar, but high priority targets probably did.

The President concluded by saying he did not believe we should authorize penetrating operations over the major area at this moment.

A. J. Goodpaster
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