February 10, 1958

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MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT
February 7, 1958

Others present: Dr. Killian
Mr. Land
General Goodpaster

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Dr. Killian said he and Mr. Land had come in to discuss a proposal for a reconnaissance satellite with the President. He said they had discussed it with Secretaries McElroy and Quarles and Mr. Allen Dulles yesterday. The project is for an earth satellite equipped with photographic apparatus in a "recoverable capsule" which could be used to yield both scientific and extremely important military information. The idea is that the satellite would circle the earth three times and then eject the capsule. It would emit no electronics signals, and could therefore be completely covert. The President asked how the capsule could be gotten back and Dr. Killian said it could be landed within a pre-selected area of ten square miles. It would be a project in which the Air Force and the Navy would join -- the Navy to recover the capsule.

Mr. Land gave further details at Dr. Killian's request. This is a specific small project for bona fide intelligence purposes. It would be of the utmost importance to carry it on quietly, under the cloak of other activities. From high-flying aircraft, with present good photography, an object of four-foot dimension can be discerned. From the satellite an object of minimum dimension somewhere between fifty and 100 feet could be discerned. It would be very easy for the Soviets, if they anticipate this operation, to build dummies that would "fool" the camera. One idea would be to get these pictures and use them as a "scouting" program to guide more precise intelligence means to selected targets. He indicated that the Air Force -- specifically General Schriever -- would work on this with CIA as a joint project. He mentioned that a THOR plus a NAVAHO booster might be used for this purpose.

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The President indicated he supposed this would be done as part of the space program Dr. Killian is working on. He also indicated that CIA should have complete and exclusive control of all of the

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intelligence phases of the operation. He said that only a handful of people should know anything at all about it.

Subsequently, because of my feeling that there might not have been full understanding between the President on the one hand and Dr. Killian and Mr. Land on the other, I met with the latter two and then talked further with the President. They clarified that what was really intended was that General Schriever and the Air Force would be in charge of the program. I told them I did not think the President had that understanding or intention. I then talked to the President, who stated emphatically that he believed the project should be centered in the new Defense "space" agency, doing what CIA wanted them to do. I so informed Dr. Killian.

Other matters taken up at the meeting are dealt with in a separate memorandum.

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A. J. Goodpaster
Brigadier General, USA