

~~TOP SECRET~~

17 August 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Discussions with Secretary Vance

Following the meeting with Kelly Johnson, et al, covered in the attached memorandum, I called Secretary Vance and stated:

1. The operational readiness of four aircraft on November 1st with a capability to overfly Cuba at 2.8 Mach at 80,000 feet was contingent upon placing of work ██████████ on the highest priority. It was, among other things, dependent upon flight testing of 3 aircraft - 121, 122 and 129 - on a maximum frequency basis from August 10th to November 1st, and developing from these test flights the betterments and modifications which must be incorporated in the operational aircraft as part of the operational readiness program.

Moreover, the program called for the equipping of the 4 operational aircraft -- 125, 127, 128 and 132 -- with parts and replacements on a priority basis as they became available and then operating these four planes on check-out tests, simulated runs, etc. in the period prior to November 1st.

The speed test, if attempted, would foreclose the operation of 2 of the 3 test planes for about one month and the effect this would have on the operational readiness date could not be calculated. Furthermore the diversion of parts, etc., to Edwards would reduce the number of operational aircraft from 4 to 2.

It was Mr. Johnson's conclusion that the diversion of component parts and the utilization of experienced personnel in the speed run tests during the latter part of August and early part of September would seriously affect the prospect of meeting the operational readiness date of November 1st and would probably delay this date for at least 30 days and perhaps longer.

NOTE: In this conversation I emphasized to Mr. Vance that I had serious reservations about the November 1st date and felt it could only be met if the A-12 program retained the highest priority.

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2. With respect to the speed run, I pointed out that the AF-12 aircraft were last in line from the standpoint of being equipped for maximum speed because, with respect to those planes, armament was given a higher priority and they were being flown to test the armament features rather than to attain speed. Therefore we were in effect taking some of the least well-equipped planes and trying to put them ahead on a crash program in order to run the speed test. I said this feature alone made the success of the speed test highly questionable in my mind.

In view of the above it was my specific recommendation that the speed test be abandoned and I wished him to confer with Secretary McNamara prior to McNamara's departure on his vacation so that a final decision could be reached by Vance and me upon my arrival in Washington this evening.

After my conversation, General Stewart stated that he concurred in my recommendation and hoped they would be accepted. Col. Ledford also concurred and Kelley Johnson concurred most emphatically. None of the 3 heard the responses from Secretary Vance, but all could hear my recommendations and the reasons as expressed above.

Upon arrival in Washington I called Vance and he reported that he and McNamara had agreed with my recommendation that the speed test be abandoned and that the work on the A-12 program be given highest priority. Vance then asked that we explore the possibility of running the speed test at an early date with an A-12 plane. I said that this had been discussed - it involved some questions of disclosure, but I would examine the question and discuss the matter further with him.

JAM/mfb