

IMPORTANT!

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DATE: MAR 2002

12 May 1954

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Special Aircraft for Penetration Photo Reconnaissance

The following information was secured today in the Office of the Under Secretary of the Air Force.

1. Over-flight is now under consideration in the Air Staff as a separate problem. It has been recognized that existing Air Force equipment is not adequate for penetration over-flight.
2. Proposals for special reconnaissance aircraft have been received in the Air Staff from Lockheed, Fairchild, and Bell. Each of these proposals recognizes that the present bottleneck is the high altitude engine. Consequently, the Special Assistant for Research, Air Force, has been pressing General McCormick, Deputy Commander, ARDC, to establish on the most urgent basis the test facilities necessary to check engines such as the J-73 at altitude ranges between 70,000 and 80,000 feet.
3. The Lockheed proposal is considered to be the best. It has been given the type designation of CL 282 and in many respects is a jet-powered glider based essentially on the Lockheed Day Fighter XF 104. It is primarily subsonic but can attain transonic speeds over the target with a consequent loss of range. With an altitude of 73,000 feet over the target it has a combat radius of 1400 nautical miles with a payload of 600 pounds of camera gear. On an overload mission it could have a radius of 1720 nautical miles but the altitude over target would be reduced to 71,500 feet. The CL 282 can be manufactured mainly with XF 104 jigs and designs. It has, however, a special wing and a slightly different nose assembly. It has no landing gear being launched from a cart. It can take off within a thousand feet and lands on a reinforced belly rib. It is powered with a J-73 engine and at varied altitude has speeds between 450.

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and 500 knots. The prototype of this plane can be produced within a year from the date of order. Five planes could be delivered for operations within two years.

4. The Bell proposal is a more conventional aircraft having normal landing gear. As a result, its maximum altitude over target is 69,500 feet and the speed and range are not as good as the Lockheed CL 282.

5. The Air Staff has received information (Note: Of doubtful accuracy) that the [redacted] with a Mark 1 Comet. As the information indicated that this plane had been attacked by Russian interceptors, the chances are that there is confusion with the Ferret interception of which we are already aware. The information received also indicated that the [redacted]

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6. It is felt in the Air Staff that two factors are essential to the securing of NSC approval for penetration over-flights.

a. A technical solution ^{by} ~~known~~ Department of Defense which is near the ultimate in reconnaissance aircraft.

b. A friend in court when Defense makes its presentation, i.e., strong support from the DCI.

[redacted]
P. G. STRONG

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Distribution

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- 1 - Chrono
- 1 - Daily Reading + Destroyed 30 April '51

*1 - Central Intelligence
C - Proprietary Systems; D - Penetration
[unclear] [unclear]*

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