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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Washington 25, D. C.

Office of the Director

29 July 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: General Thomas D. White
Chief of Staff
United States Air Force

SUBJECT: Future Plans for Project AQUATONE/OILSTONE

A variety of circumstances make it necessary at this time to go forward with plans and preparations for the future of Project AQUATONE/OILSTONE. This matter was discussed on 19 July by the DDCI with the Vice Chief of Staff. In confirmation of their conversation, this memorandum summarizes the considerations which lead us to believe that the present joint Project should be continued next year, and our plans for its continuation. We will have a much firmer basis for such judgments as this in a few weeks and it goes without saying that any decisions made at this time may have to be modified.

A decision on the future of this Project clearly should be based on our joint estimate of the probability that overflight operations will be permitted next year by the political authorities and of the advantages they see in having such operations conducted by a civilian agency using civilian pilots rather than by a military organization. Whether overflights are permitted will, in turn, depend largely on: the risk of loss of an aircraft by enemy interception or otherwise; and the risk of strong Russian diplomatic or political reaction to such activities. Our present views on these points are as follows:

a. As to risk of loss, we have as yet seen no hard evidence that the Russians have developed an interception capability effective above 65,000 feet and we believe that there is a chance that electronic countermeasures may reduce the effectiveness of such an interception capability when developed. We estimate therefore, that the risk of interception will be low enough to be acceptable. The risk of loss through malfunction is always present but will be no greater than heretofore and appears to be acceptable.

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b. As to risk of diplomatic protest, we are still hopeful that the experience of the current season will demonstrate that at least occasional overflights of the USSR can be conducted without eliciting embarrassing diplomatic protests provided a few of the most highly sensitive areas (such as Moscow itself) are avoided and provided overflights of the USSR are not tracked by one or more of the Satellite governments to the embarrassment of the Russian military establishment. We also hope that the Russian tracking ability will be impaired by electronic countermeasures to a point where they will not have solid evidence on which to base protests.

c. As to sponsorship, it is our understanding that the political authorities prefer to have this mission performed under civilian sponsorship as at present, and that such sponsorship therefore increases the likelihood of obtaining permission to operate.

We conclude from the foregoing that sporadic overflight activity, at least, is quite likely to be permitted by our political authorities but that there is little prospect for an intensive overflight program. Accordingly, we believe the present joint project should be continued for another season in order to maintain an overflight capability in what we believe to be the most acceptable form, but on a reduced scale appropriate to a variable, and on the average low, level of activity.

To give effect to these conclusions, we propose to maintain only two Detachments at reduced strength instead of three as at present. On the basis of this planning, one of the two units now stationed in Europe will be phased out in October 1957 and the other will be based at Giebelstadt. The Detachment now in the Far East will remain at Atsugi NAS at least until January 1958 and probably longer. Should it be deemed feasible for political or security reasons to move this unit out of Japan, it will be redeployed to Edwards AFB or some other suitable base in the ZI. Any continuing research and development will also be conducted at Edwards AFB. We plan certain changes in both organizational arrangements and ground support equipment designed to maximize the mobility of the two remaining

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Detachments so they will be ready on short notice to stage through advanced bases in the Far East and [redacted] and will be able in this way to obtain coverage of any part of the Soviet Bloc accessible from friendly territory.

This contemplated reduction in scale will render a number of aircraft and other items of equipment surplus to this program. It appears that an initial transfer of five aircraft can be made in November of this year. Further transfers will of course be made as and when additional aircraft and other items become surplus. It is our hope that we can arrive at an agreement with you whereby equipment turned over to the Air Force by this Project can be borrowed back at a later date if a requirement for it should arise.

The execution of these plans obviously depends on continued Air Force support. They are based on the assumption, as indicated above, that this Project will be able to retain the facilities now occupied by it at [redacted] and Edwards Air Force Base and possibly to obtain some additional facilities at Edwards AFB. If feasible, arrangements should be made to leave certain supplies and ground equipment in place at [redacted] and at a [redacted] or other Far Eastern base and to obtain the temporary use of certain facilities at these bases when required for staging operations. I recognize the burden that the provision of this support places upon the Air Force but hope it will be appreciably reduced by the planned reduction in the scale of this activity.

The Air Force has been a full partner in this enterprise from the beginning and I will of course be happy to discuss any of these points with you if you so desire. I will look forward to receiving your comments.

(Signed)
Allen W. Dulles

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