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EO 12958 6.2(c)

D/SA

MD

14 June 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy for Materiel, OSA

SUBJECT: Operational Considerations - Revival of OXCART

The following operational considerations are presented to assist you in preparing your memorandum to DDI on the subject of regeneration of the OXCART vehicle:

REQUIREMENT:

There is sufficient interest within CIA to warrant exploring the feasibility, cost and timing associated with regenerating an operational OXCART weapons system to be operated by a field unit under direction of OSA. This regeneration to be accomplished so as to put an operational vehicle over a North Vietnam target in the shortest possible time.

BACKGROUND:

When the OXCART vehicles and program were put to bed in 1968 a complete "regeneration" package was placed in storage as well. This package contained operating procedures, mission directives, checklists, names of qualified personnel, etc. It did, in fact, contain all possible information which might be needed for program revival. It was generally agreed that program regeneration in the first 6 months to a year could be fairly easy and rapid - after that time frame, recapture would become increasingly expensive, time consuming and difficult personnel wise. The OXCART aircraft and equipment went into storage in the June to September 1968 time frame on a 5/90 basis, i. e., sufficient parts equipment, AGE, etc. would be on hand to support a five operational aircraft fleet for 90 days if reconstituted; this 90 day time frame would then be used to crank up the spares mill, obtain more money, make further decisions, etc. on program continuance.

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ASSUMPTIONS:

A. Project would receive number one priority in personnel, funding and equipment.

B. Existing weapons system as put away could be brought out and would be useable, operationally capable. E.g., no new EWS would be put in the aircraft.

C. Vulnerability assessment remains the same as when put away.

D. That SR-71 personal equipment and survival gear are compatible with OXCART airframe. This due to the OXCART seat being unsatisfactory and OXCART pressure suits no longer available.

E. That all types of qualified personnel are readily available, could be pitched and brought on board in minimum time with little or no security problems.

OPERATIONAL CONCEPT - TRAINING PHASE:

To provide a desirable level of operational capability, at least two aircraft should be removed from storage and put into flying condition. Obviously, the more aircraft available, the higher the probability of achieving mission goals becomes.

Pilot assets could be drawn from the SR-71 program, or former A-12 pilots could be recalled. In either case, the initial training phase would consist of extensive ground school on aircraft systems and operating characteristics. Four pilots should be selected initially for the two aircraft concept. The time required in this phase would be shorter if current SR-71 pilots were used because of the similarities in basic aircraft systems and the fact that these pilots have the required personal equipment and high altitude physiological training. The time for this phase is estimated at 2 - 4 weeks.

The pilot source would also influence the flight training phase. However, in either case, a minimum of eight flights is anticipated. These would include the gamut from low altitude subsonic to high altitude, high speed photographic and two and three refueling missions.

Based on the sortie generation rate per aircraft at the time the OXCART Program phased out, a figure of eight sorties per month is felt to be realistic. In order to facilitate flight training, it should be accomplished at Beale AFB, California. In this way, maximum use could be made of the common support facilities required and air traffic control arrangements.

Using the above data, it would be possible to have a conditional OR status with one pilot and one aircraft within 30 to 45 days after the aircraft demothballing is complete and an OR bird has been delivered to the operating unit. For a full detachment of two aircraft and four pilots, approximately 60 to 90 days after the second aircraft is available seems a good target date.

During this entire period, from go-ahead to operationally ready, the required operations support functions (commander, ops officer, flight planning, commo, etc.) would be staffed and prepared to effect the transition from training missions to operational tasks. It is estimated a detachment of 200 - 250 personnel would be required.

OPERATIONAL CONCEPT - OR PHASE:

The detachment would deploy to a forward operating location for ops missions. Again, the concept of collocation with the SR-71 unit is preferred because of the common support environment.

Operational missions would be flown using SAC tanker support. This requirement would be facilitated by collocation also, i. e., Kadena AB the current SR-71 Far East operating location.

Depending upon the anticipated duration of the project, follow on training of aircrews and support personnel would be initiated. Channels for expediting take movement and feedback for follow on requirements would be required. Logistic support would be provided by USAF.

A minimum of two aircraft and three pilots would be required to insure mission flexibility and the potential for back to back or simultaneous missions.

Additionally, the aircraft is assumed to be fully equipped with operational EWS. Flights without EWS would have an increased vulnerability to ground defensive systems.



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