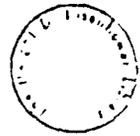


April 3, 1959



MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT
April 3, 1959 - 9:00 AM

HR70-14

Others present: Secretary McElroy Dr. Killian
 Secretary Quarles Mr. Bissell
 General Twining General Goodpastor
 Secretary Murphy Major Eisenhower
 Mr. Allen Dulles

Mr. Dulles opened the meeting by describing the difficult and delicate problem of obtaining information on the subject of enemy ICBM development. We do not know whether the ICBMs being developed by the Soviets will be mobile or fixed; hardened or soft. The intelligence community considers this about as high in importance as any intelligence we can get. Unless we have unexpected breakthroughs, our only method of learning about this would be another overflight with the U-2. Accordingly, Mr. Dulles requested permission to fly one mission in the South of Russia to cover the Tyraa Tam range in an area slightly to the North, and another mission to be flown in the North of Russia where we have reason to believe that the Soviets are preparing hardened sites. Mr. Dulles stated that he prefers the mission in the South as a matter of higher importance. However, he would be happy to run only the North mission if such were approved. The mission in the North would have the advantage of being so located that we could claim, if detected, that the aircraft had been lost from a Polar transport route.

The President had considerable reservations on the advisability of flying such a mission at this time. These reservations he expressed as follows:

(a) If the Soviets develop a sufficient number of ICBMs, it would appear that information on their degree of hardness and their degree of mobility would be of little value to us. (Here the President was referring to the Macmillan briefing which quoted the possibility eventually of a Soviet attack by 1500 missiles in salvo.) Here General Twining and Mr. McElroy agreed, so long as we are dealing in that order of magnitude. They pointed out, however, that we do not at this moment know of a single missile site under construction.

(b) Failure to find hardened sites will prove nothing. What we are seeking here is information, but negative information will have no value. Here the President pointed out the feasibility of concealment of ICBM production sites, quoting primarily the TITAN site near Denver. (This point he brought out in connection with General Twining's remark that the Soviets

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can make ample use of our uncertainty if we have no hard intelligence on their actual capabilities.)

(c) With regard to Tyura Tam, the President felt that information obtained from that area would indicate nothing as recent progress of actual construction. In this connection, he cited the great difficulty of concealing construction while it is under way. He does not feel that our intelligence on this matter must be obtained "this year or never."

(d) The psychological impact on Khrushchev of our flying such a mission at this time would be very serious. We are currently in a state of negotiations over the Berlin crisis which threatens to be one of the most serious of our crises to date. As an example of the mood, he cited the statement made recently by Khrushchev to Mr. Carlo Schmid of the German Socialist Party that no unilateral action would be taken by the Soviets until after the termination of a summit meeting. He further cited the State Department's apparently optimistic outlook for negotiations, as evidenced by their requesting his approval asking Khrushchev for information on our eleven missing airmen (from the C-130 incident last fall). Since our U-2 flights have been detected consistently for the past two years, we will inevitably be needling Khrushchev by conducting such an action. This could have serious repercussions on the negotiating atmosphere we are trying to foster. Mr. Murphy confirmed the President's view that Khrushchev would exact a price for such action on our part.

In the course of the discussion, various other issues were brought out:

(a) The unfavorable reflection of Soviet testing on their claims of having ICBMs in serial production.

(b) 

(c) The vulnerability of the U-2 to the Soviet YAK interceptor. Here Mr. Quarles feels the U-2 is relatively safe so long as the Soviets have not developed a reliable air-to-air missile. This was confirmed by Mr. Bissell and Dr. Killian by mentioning the mission last fall in which the Soviets scrambled fifty aircraft.

(d) A comparison between Soviet and U.S. SAM capabilities. It was agreed that the Soviets apparently do not have a capability comparable to that of NIKE (60,000 feet altitude and 30 miles range for AJAX; 75,000 feet altitude and 75 miles range for HERCULES). If they did, the U-2 would not

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be able to perform its mission.

As a result of this meeting, the President stated that he is not happy with the idea of overflights at this time, but he said that he would discuss the matter in detail with Secretary Herter.



John S. D. Eisenhower
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