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19 October 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR : Deputy Director (Science and Technology)

SUBJECT : Procurement of C Triple Prime Camera Systems for  
Project IDEALIST

1. Now that a certain amount of the dust has settled on the confusion of the past week with regard to the status of, and procurement intentions for, the C Triple Prime system, I think we should tell you briefly where we stand and what course we are pursuing.

2. As you know, the prototype camera installed in vehicle No. 342 gives us a swath width of some 17.3 nautical miles. It does not, however, offer stereo convergence, which is caused by the photo interpreter to be an invaluable tool in maximizing the yield from the photography. This single prototype installation remains a "Flying Breadboard" in the sense that we do not at the moment have spare parts back-up and support equipment to sustain an operational camera program. It can, however, be used with moderation, although its installation in an aircraft other than No. 342 does require a certain amount of rewiring, bracket installation, etc., taking several days and costing in the neighborhood of [ ] per change-over to another aircraft.

3. Our intention all along has been that once the resolution limits of the camera were established through flight tests and operation, we would move toward a dual camera configuration which we hoped would provide convergent stereo in a much broader swath width. Up until late this week we had hoped to be able to nearly double the 17.3NM figure. It turns out, however, that this is not as simple as we had hoped, and that one of the principal limitations in achieving our goal is the size of the equipment bay on the aircraft, which does not permit tilting of the camera in such a manner as to achieve the optimum we had anticipated. This is not to say that it could not be done ultimately, but I am told that this would require a new development program with considerable

NRO and USAF review(s) completed.

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investment of time and money to achieve. Such a program would also have one disadvantage, and that is that the system ultimately developed would not be susceptible to retrofitting into any system we can buy today.

4. What we come up with then is the following proposal:

a. We are proposing to procure a total of four dual camera systems furnishing 17.3NM swath width with 30 degrees convergent stereo, 70 degrees lateral coverage, two to one contrast, target specifications calling for better than 10 inches ground resolution with 3,000 plus NM linear coverage. The delivery of the first system is targeted for four months after an equipment bay mock up meeting with Lockheed which we will press for within the next week.

b. The cost of this proposal is [REDACTED] as a budget figure. Contract negotiation may well be able to come below this target, since we will argue that having paid for the basic R&D on the camera under the CORONA Program, we should achieve a price break not only on this item, but on the ground support equipment involved. The first camera system will call [REDACTED] This includes two sets of GSE, which when combined with four camera systems should enable us to deploy an operational capability to two theaters of operation at once. This, of course, is the basic premise of our staging concept.

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c. If we simply wanted carbon copies of the prototype system now in Article 342, these could be procured [REDACTED] each with delivery in three months. We are not recommending this move.

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5. I have not yet been able to determine the extent of independent USAF-SAC negotiations with Itek to procure the C Triple Prime system. I did learn 18 October, however, that [REDACTED] of Colonel Geary's office, AFIGO-S, has been in touch with Itek requesting an unspecified number of these systems for SAC U-2's. In this regard he may simply be jumping the gun, since I had planned to formally advise D/NRO of our

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procurement plans and to invite USAF-SAC through him to participate with us in whatever procurement he and the JRC regarded as appropriate. This might, of course, give us a modest price break with Itek beyond our present expectations. Despite the reported action by Air Force, I will press to see if we cannot engineer joint procurement during the next few days. I should mention finally that our aim remains to avoid limiting ourselves to the C Triple Prime as a result of this procurement. The aircraft will be capable of flying with the B configuration on one day and C Triple Prime a day or two later. This requirement for interchangeability is what necessitates an equipment bay mock up session, among other things, with Lockheed.

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