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6 OCT 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director/Intelligence

SUBJECT: U. S. Scientific Satellite Program (NSC 5520)

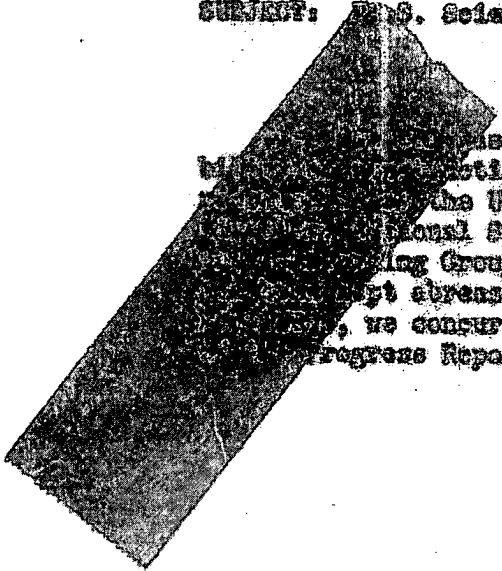
1. The following is in reply to your request for comments on the Department of Defense Progress Report (October 3, 1956) on the above subject to the National Security Council. This Office is concerned primarily with the second objective of the NSC action, i.e., the prestige and psychological benefits that would accrue. In this connection, the following intelligence information on the Soviet program is supplied as possible use to you.

2. In April 1955, the USSR announced the formation of the Permanent Interagency Commission for Interplanetary Communications. There is other evidence, however, that this Commission was in existence at least as early as the fall of 1954. The above public announcement represented the first official indication that the USSR was actively engaging in the problems associated with the launching of earth satellite vehicle, as one of the initial tasks of this Commission was stated to be the organization of work for the creation of an "automatic" laboratory for scientific research of outer space. Following the U. S. lead in making public announcements of specific earth satellite program intentions, the USSR has, since late 1955, released to the press numerous statements concerning their intentions to launch satellites during a time period which corresponds to the IGY. Their statements have been interpreted as reflecting an intent to compete with and improve upon the U. S. program with respect to both time scale and weight of the instrumented nose section. On the basis of the Soviet estimated guided missile capability, we believe the USSR possesses the basic technical capabilities, skills and other resources required to develop, build and orbit an unmanned satellite vehicle. The successful orbiting of such a vehicle requires solving many of the same scientific and technical problems as encountered in long-range ballistic missiles. We believe that the USSR will make a major effort to be the first country to orbit an earth satellite. We further believe it has the capability of orbiting a small vehicle, in early 1957, which could acquire scientific information and data of limited military value. A satellite possessing substantial reconnaissance capabilities of military value could probably be orbited in the period 1963-1965.

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... was asked by NSC to comment on the need and feasibility of constructing and launching six additional satellites as recommended by the U. S. National Committee for the NSI and by the National Science Foundation. Through representation in the Working Group concerned generally with NSC 5520, this Office kept abreast of the development program. In light of this, we concur with the comments 1 through 4 on pages 3 and 4 of the Progress Report.



EO 13526 3.5(c)

HERBERT SCOVILLE, JR.
Assistant Director
Scientific Intelligence



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