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February 8, 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

In the meeting of the President and his Board of Consultants on Foreign Intelligence Activities on February 2, there was discussion of the question of overflights. The group had proposed that this source of intelligence be utilized to the maximum degree possible. The President commented that this is one of the most "soul-searching" questions to come before a President. General Hull said he recognized the difficulty but pointed out that, for example, we had saved ourselves a lot of money through the knowledge that the Bison aircraft was not being produced in the quantities originally estimated. He added that a recent flight disclosed military deployments and dispositions that gave no sign of a slackening off in Soviet military power, as might have been suggested by the "spirit of Camp David."



The President stated that he knew of no "spirit of Camp David." What was accomplished was frank and respectful discussion of important issues, and a mutual recognition of the overriding importance of avoiding general war. He added that every bit of information he has seen corroborates what Khrushchev told him at Camp David -- for example regarding the Soviet cut-back in surface ships, aircraft, atomic power production, etc. Khrushchev added that he was not too much interested in short-range missiles. The President said he recognizes that intelligence has value, but in today's circumstances the ICBM is taking on central importance. If the Soviets concentrate on big missiles they have only one mode of action -- to attempt a knock-out blow, and to receive such a blow in return.

General Hull mentioned that there are a great many unknowns in the equation of Soviet military strength and preparation.

The President said that he has one tremendous asset in a summit meeting, as regards effect in the free world. That is his reputation for honesty. If one of these aircraft were lost when we are engaged in apparently sincere deliberations, it could be put on

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~~TOP SECRET~~

- 2 -

display in Moscow and ruin the President's effectiveness. He recalled the adverse impact of the display by the Soviets some years ago of the U. S. reconnaissance balloons they captured.

General Doolittle stressed the importance of determining what is the mode of operations the Soviets intend to employ in connection with their guided missiles. He said that SAC people had told him that in six flights they could obtain full coverage.

The President said that this is always an agonizing question. He felt he cannot dissipate his reputation for a different mode of behavior from that of Khrushchev in international affairs.

General Hull said that the time remaining during which such reconnaissance flights can be conducted is very limited because the Soviets are catching up to the capabilities of our aircraft. At the President's request I recalled that there is a new generation aircraft under development which will fly much higher and much faster and have a much lower radar cross-section. General Doolittle pointed out that the reliability of a new airplane is bound to be much lower. This is a special factor in this connection, since the embarrassment to us will be so great if one crashes.




A. J. Goodpaster
Brigadier General, USA

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