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6-0128

MEMORANDUM FOR: DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

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SUBJECT: Earth Satellite Vehicle (ESV)

1. As a result of the large missile development effort the launching of a small earth satellite in the next three years is almost certainly feasible. Although the Department of Defense has several satellite projects in planning stages, their mission would not justify accelerating satellite development without an outside, high level requirement. The capability of the Soviet Union and the United States of placing in orbit a satellite to collect basic scientific data is approximately the same.

2. Because the satellite will be the greatest scientific advancement since the hydrogen bomb, the United States should do everything possible to gain the prestige of this achievement. The first satellite should be launched in a peaceful setting not only to provide the greatest psychological warfare potential but also to facilitate the launching of future, more elaborate satellites.

3. The International Geophysical Year, 1957-58, offers a unique opportunity. It would provide the United States with maximum favorable publicity, an international setting, worldwide scientific cooperation, a clearly established peaceful motive, and a reaffirmation of Free World scientific values and methods.

4. If we are to have a satellite by 1957 the requirement must be established in the next month or two. If you concur,

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I suggest that I arrange informal talks with Mr. Donald Quarles, Department of Defense, and Dr. Allen Waterman, National Science Foundation. The Department of State should also be consulted.

5. If the above parties are favorable, I suggest you send the attached letter to the President recommending that he establish a tentative requirement for a small satellite to be launched in the International Geophysical Year, 1957-58. The letter should be accompanied by a brief discussion of the satellite (Tab A) and of the Soviet/U.S. stage of development (Tab B). The National Science Foundation would direct the project with the Department of Defense responsible for the development of the satellite.

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Special Assistant to the Director
for Policy and Coordination

Attachment:

Draft Letter to the President
with Tabs A and B.

ATTACHMENT

ATTACH-
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DRAFT OF RECOMMENDED DGI LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

There is a growing interest in both the Soviet Union and the United States in the development of Earth Satellite Vehicles (ESV) as a result of the large-scale missile development effort. It seems inevitable that either the United States or the Soviet Union will place an ESV in space within the next few years.

In order to retain the initiative in the ESV field and yet avoid any military stigma, it would be of great psychological and political advantage for the U.S. to launch a first ESV in a peaceful setting which stressed the scientific research aspects of the development. This would also set an international precedent that would make it easier for the U.S. to conduct future ESV launchings.

The attached CIA staff study has led to the conclusion that the forthcoming International Geophysical Year, 1957-58, affords a unique opportunity for such sponsorship. There is increasing interest in scientific circles in the possibility of launching a small U.S. sponsored ESV as one of the events of that year.

It is therefore recommended that a Presidential Directive be issued as suggested on page 4 of Tab A.

1. A tentative requirement for the development of an ESV in conjunction with the International Geophysical Year, 1957-58.
2. A select scientific group, appointed by and acting under the Scientific Advisory Committee of ODM, to render an official decision on the feasibility of the project, and to implement this decision, if favorable.

Tab A - Satellite Discussion

Tab B - US/Soviet Stage of Development