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#2 report	summary record of NSC Meeting 521 top secret <i>scritza</i> NSC letter 10-24-67 p	<i>Open NLT 92-46 4/98</i> 05/05/64	A
#3 report	record of actions, secret <i>Open 9-21-92 NLT 90-136</i>	1 p 05/05/64	A

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~~TOP SECRET CODEWORD~~ NLJ 92-46
By iso, NARA Date 4-2-98

Summary Record of National Security Council Meeting No. 531
May 5, 1964, 12:00 noon - Laos and Overflights of Cuba

The meeting began without the President. Secretary Rusk asked Secretary McNamara to review the problem of the use of electronic countermeasures (ECM) on U-2s overflying Cuba.

Secretary McNamara said that the use of ECM in the U-2 would not, in his opinion, seriously compromise implementation of SIOP. Some experts believe the survivability of U.S. bombers over the USSR will be reduced if ECM is used over Cuba. This is very hard to evaluate. However, the use of ECM on U-2s over Cuba will not provide great protection for the planes flying regularly over Cuba. The protection will be limited to the first plane flying over. It would not be sufficient to protect U-2s on a regular flight basis. After the first flight there would be a 90% chance of a successful shutdown if the Cubans made a determined attack on the plane.

General Taylor said that the use of ECM would not have a serious effect on the implementation of SIOP. However, some fourteen countries now have Soviet SAM systems. To use ECM in Cuba would undoubtedly result in the transmittal to these other countries of the methods of dealing with the ECM. In addition, there may come a time when we have a critical need to look at a SAM-defended site. If we use the ECM now, we would throw away the one free ride which we would like to have in reserve in case of critical need. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommends against the use of ECM because it will not protect continued overflights, plus the fact that its use will risk compromising the ECM equipment.

Secretary McNamara said that flight plans could be made which expose a U-2 to attack from fewer SAM sites. He did not recommend that this course of action be followed.

The discussion then turned to the use of drones. Secretary McNamara said the use of drones would be an awkward way of meeting our intelligence requirements. We had never operated drones to this extent. There are numerous operational problems limiting the capability of drones. We have enough drones now so that within ninety days we could carry out our full reconnaissance requirements, but for the next ninety days we could obtain only 75% of our requirements. These estimates excluded enemy action against the drones. With existing drones encountering enemy action we could probably carry on for several weeks, operating at the 59,000 to 54,000 foot level.

~~TOP SECRET CODEWORD~~

Director McCone said he had trouble with the suggestion that we rely on drones to meet our aerial reconnaissance requirements. Only two drones are operational now at 50,000 feet. Two more will be operational in the next fifteen days at this height. The U-2 operates at 64,000 to 68,000 feet. This difference in altitude is important because the drones flying at the lower level will have contrails. Thus, they are more detectable and more vulnerable. In addition, there is considerable difference in the width of ground photographed -- 18 vs. 30 nautical miles. The drones have a 255 linear mile limit, which is considerably less than the U-2s. There is a loss of track accuracy of plus or minus five miles, or approximately an eighteen-mile swath.

Secretary McNamara said he agreed with Mr. McCone's evaluation of the difference between the U-2s and drones, but, even so, we could carry out our required intelligence mission by using drones. The cost would be about \$80,000 per drone mission or about \$150,000 per U-2 equivalent. It is true that the drones will cost more and are less predictable. If there is enemy action against the drones, they would be able to carry out their mission for a period varying from two to six weeks.

Mr. Bundy asked whether Secretary McNamara was thinking of a course which would run Castro out of weapons. Secretary McNamara said he was. For example, we might use non-photographic drones which would be less costly to lose.

Mr. McCone said the idea of running Castro out of SAM missiles would depend on whether he used MIG-21s against the drones. Secretary McNamara replied that great pilot skill is required if a MIG actually shoots down a drone.

Secretary McNamara said that the possibility of our using drones was leaking to the press. This disturbed him greatly and he had instructed his press officers to deny flatly that any consideration is being given to the substitution of drones for U-2s.

Under Secretary Ball made the point that if it became known to the Cubans that we were flying drones, Castro would undoubtedly attack them. Mr. Bundy said that he agreed that the Cubans would act much more promptly against a drone than against piloted planes. Secretary McNamara commented that we would have to respond to the shooting down of drones at some point, particularly if it later became possible for us to fly thirty drones per month.

Mr. McCone said the intelligence community's best estimate was that Castro had in Cuba 500 missiles for his SAMs. General Taylor said that the Cubans would not really know whether we were flying drones or piloted U-2s. Secretary McNamara pointed out, however, that if the Cubans knocked out drone after drone, we would have to make some response.

With respect to balloons, Secretary McNamara said these had many of the disadvantages of drones, but operational difficulties with them were much higher.

Secretary Rusk asked whether, if we made the maximum use of peripheral photography, our overflights requirement would be reduced. Mr. McCone said not significantly.

Secretary Rusk asked whether, if the Cubans took their case to the United Nations and said they were prepared to accept UN on-site inspection as soon as we gave up our overflights, would we find this acceptable? Mr. McCone replied that on-site inspection can now be made much more dependable than was the case in October 1962 because we now have many aerial photographs of the island. The information we have received from these photographs will not decay seriously over time.

Alexis Johnson recalled that the 1962 inspection plan had called for overflights by UN planes in addition to on-site inspection. We could renew this proposal and insist on the UN-operated reconnaissance system. Mr. Bundy said he believed this put us in a very strong position. He thought that we could sell our European allies on such a proposal. He said that it was important, however, to make clear the difference between the kind of intelligence we wanted about specific targets for use in the event of an invasion and the kind of information which we need to reassure that strategic missiles were not being introduced into Cuba.

Secretary Rusk asked if we could use a combination of means of aerial reconnaissance. He agreed that if the Cubans heard that we were replacing U-2s with drones they would certainly try to shoot down the drones.

Secretary McNamara repeated his view that if word gets around that we are using drones, the Cubans would say that we are weakening our position. The Attorney General agreed that if the word got around that we were no longer flying U-2s, but using drones, the effect on public opinion would indeed be serious. He expressed his view forcefully.

Secretary Rusk asked what was the status of the proposal to use the A-11 plane. Mr. McCone replied that the A-11 was not ready for use. It has been operated successfully but not yet at the maximum speed it is apparently able to reach. It is coming along very well, indeed, but it would be most dangerous to use the A-11 now. The A-11 is vulnerable to flameout and to other operational difficulties. Several additional months are needed for testing to ensure that the plane is fully operational. For example, he said the early versions of the A-11 had to come down to 35,000 feet in order to relight their engines after a flameout. A way around this limitation had been found, but each plane had to be modified to include the new equipment making possible the relighting of the engines without the descent. He said we are on the very far frontier of knowledge and there are many problems remaining. Those who had operated the planes were unanimous in agreeing that it would be reckless to use them over Cuba without further testing. Secretary McNamara said everyone was unanimous in opposing the use of the A-11 for at least several months. Secretary Rusk said that if the Cubans learned an A-11 was flying over they would make every effort to shoot it down.

With respect to the vulnerability of the A-11, Mr. McCone said the plane would be much less vulnerable when it was fully ready. There were many imponderables in trying to decide whether the plane could be shot down. He concluded that it was theoretically possible to shoot down an A-11 if everything used against it worked perfectly, i. e., a perfectly trained crew and a perfect SAM site operation. He reminded the group that although the A-11 cannot be seen, its sonic boom can be heard clearly. Therefore, from Castro's point of view, the use of the A-11 would be more objectionable than the U-2.

Ambassador Thompson commented that it was doubtful that Castro would contemplate early action against an overflying plane. He said the Soviets were very conscious of the timing in relation to the elections in the U.S. The Russians would object to the Cubans

taking the case to the UN because our insistence on overflights would reveal that we think the Russians are capable of sending strategic missiles back to Cuba.

Mr. Alexis Johnson pointed out that while Castro might not push his case in the UN, the Secretary General undoubtedly would ask for our informal views on Castro's letter to the Secretary General. Secretary Rusk replied that if this happened we could remind the Secretary General of our 1962 offer and say that we were prepared to negotiate on the basis of Castro accepting on-site inspection and UN aerial reconnaissance. Mr. Alexis Johnson replied that we had some time in which to work this out. He felt we had several months.

The President joined the group and Secretaries Rusk and McNamara summarized the earlier discussion.

As to compromising the ECM, Secretary McNamara said he doubted its use would result in making more difficult the implementation of the SIOP. He said that ECM did not ensure survival of the U-2, but that the first plane flown with ECM had a very high chance of escaping. This percentage dropped sharply after the first flight. He asked General Taylor to summarize the Joint Chiefs of Staff views on ECM. General Taylor repeated his earlier comments.

With respect to drones, Secretary McNamara estimated that even with enemy action, we would be able to carry on a continuous program of drone flights for one to twelve weeks, but if Castro fired on the drones, we would obviously have a major political problem.

With respect to the A-11, Mr. McCone summarized his view that the plane was not now ready for use.

The President said, "This gets you back to where you were." Secretary McNamara replied, "Yes." Secretary Rusk said that was true, with one addition. We could engage in a political holding action with the UN Secretary General. There are ways to keep the ball in play, but we expect nothing to come of these moves.

The President asked how serious Castro was when he made statements about preventing overflights. Secretary Rusk replied that

over time he undoubtedly was serious. However, there are things we can do to reduce the risk of a shoot-down but we cannot back away in the face of Castro's threats.

The President asked if one of our planes is shot down, do we take out the SAM sites? Mr. Bundy replied that the contingency called for taking out one or more SAM sites.

Secretary McNamara recommended that we proceed on the assumption that for the next week there will be no attack on our U-2s. We should continue the flights of the U-2s. The Defense Department will look again at the proposals to use an ECM-equipped U-2 and to use drones. The production of drones will be immediately increased, but a flat denial will be made to any press queries about whether consideration is being given to the use of drones.

The question was asked whether the readiness of the OXCART could be speeded up. Secretary Dillon asked what could be done in an allout effort to increase the readiness of the OXCART. Mr. McCone replied that the operators were working as fast as they could on dealing with each problem as it arises. He said he would keep the pressure on but he did not think that a crash program should be undertaken. He cited again the case of modifying the planes in order to make it possible for the pilot to relight the engine at maximum altitude in the event of a flameout.

Secretary Rusk asked whether we should read anything into the timing of the public release by Castro of the discovery of the arms cache off the Cuban coast. Assistant Secretary Mann said we knew of their discovery of this cache on April 20th and they had waited several days before making their discovery public.

LAOS

In response to the President's question, Mr. Bundy said the experts on Laos were prepared to give a short briefing if the President so desired.

Assistant Secretary Bundy briefed on the operations which were now being carried out. No request for additional authority was made to the President. The cross-border patrols and low-level reconnaissance missions, which the concerned Departments in Washington agree upon, will be undertaken. They fall within the authority given by the President following Secretary McNamara's last trip to Vietnam. Certain of the operations which were opposed by Ambassador Unger for political reasons will not be undertaken for the time being.

Secretary Rusk said he agreed that we should postpone for a week low-level reconnaissance, but he did not wish to delay much longer. The need to know more about what is going on in Laos as regards the infiltration of men and equipment is so great that a decision needs to be taken soon if our information is to be augmented. He suggested that we should persuade Souvanna Phouma to ask the International Control Commission (ICC) to undertake the intelligence missions we would like to see carried out. We could offer to hold up low-level reconnaissance if the ICC would agree to undertake the necessary missions.

Secretary McNamara said the Viet Cong is increasing its pressure in the areas north of South Vietnam. He cited a significant communications buildup which might mean that a major effort was being undertaken by the North Vietnamese to increase their military buildup for use either in Laos or in South Vietnam. He agreed we should wait for a week to see what developments take place in Laos. Our capability to undertake low-level reconnaissance will be brought to a 24- to 48-hour readiness status.

Bromley Smith

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCILRECORD OF ACTIONSNSC
Action2487. OVERFLIGHTS OF CUBA

- a. Noted the President's agreement to ... continue overflights of Cuba at the rate of no more than three U-2 missions weekly.
- b. Noted that Defense and CIA will continue to examine alternative methods of obtaining the required aerial intelligence.

DECLASSIFIED
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By llp, NARA, Date 9-10-92

May 5, 1964
531st NSC Meeting
NSC Action 2487

~~SECRET~~

NSC Control No. 164

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 5, 1964 -- 11:45 meeting before NSC
meeting

✓ Secretary Rusk
Attorney General
Director McCone
Deputy Secretary Vance
General Taylor
Under Secretary Ball
Deputy Under Secretary Johnson
Ambassador Thompson
Assistant Secretary Mann
Secretary Dillon
Mr. McGeorge Bundy
Mr. Bromley Smith

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ATTENDANCE LIST FOR THE 531st NSC MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, MAY 5, 1964, AT 12:00 NOON
IN THE CABINET ROOM OF THE WHITE HOUSE

The President of the United States, Presiding

Speaker of the House of Representatives

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Robert F. Kennedy

CIA

John A. McCone, Director

William Colby

DEFENSE

Robert S. McNamara, Secretary

Cyrus Vance, Deputy Secretary

John McNaughton, Assistant Secretary (ISA)

JCS

General Maxwell D. Taylor, USA, Chairman

OEP

Edward A. McDermott, Director

STATE

Dean Rusk, Secretary

George W. Ball, Under Secretary

U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs

Llewellyn E. Thompson, Ambassador-at-large

Thomas Mann, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs

William P. Bundy, Asst. Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs (Item 2)

Averell Harriman, (Item 2)

TREASURY

C. Douglas Dillon, Secretary

USIA

Carl T. Rowan, Director

WHITE HOUSE

McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President

Jack Valenti, Special Assistant to the President

Michael Forrestal, Senior Member, National Security Council (Item 2)

Bromley Smith, Executive Secretary, National Security Council