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20 March 1956

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Project Security Office  
FROM: 25X1A9a : [REDACTED] 2/20/56  
SUBJECT : Cover Meeting with AWS and NACA

1. On 15 March 1956 a meeting was held in the Project conference room for the purpose of finalizing the AQUATONE cover story in a fashion agreeable to all participating parties, CIA, AWS and NACA.

2. I have attempted to keep you informed of the progress being made with respect to cover by furnishing copies of proposals made to date. You will recall that two plans had been proposed, one which would make AWS the prime sponsor and a second which named a commercial sponsor. The choice as to which proposal the Agency would accept was left for the decision of the Deputy Director, CIA as he had previously made known his personal thoughts concerning the cover and had deferred final decision until all factors, pro and con, had been recorded.

3. This meeting opened with a statement by Mr. Bissell that an agreement had been reached between the Air Staff and the Deputy Director CIA whereby we, the project staff, would build or make available from one to four configurations fitted for use in upper atmosphere research. No attempt would be made at this time to use any AWS equipment other than that which has been designed to date. This was for the purpose of not delaying our primary missions but does not in any way mean that we would not accept more current AWS R&D equipment as it was developed. The AWS equipment would have to be arranged on a framework which could be interchanged with our present mission equipment. The idea being that on days when weather over contemplated project targets was such that our missions would not operate, we would schedule AWS reconnaissance activity in the upper atmosphere either over friendly or enemy targets. It is also planned to have some weather gathering instruments installed which could be carried during project missions. These would be small in size and capable of being installed internally or externally. Items considered were barometers, temperature gauges, velocity meters and other items of this size.

4. It has been decided that NACA will be the prime sponsor and AWS will be called upon to support the missions. This will then mean that aircraft will have to carry NACA markings. Dr. Drayden was questioned as to whether aircraft identification would have to be

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coordinated with CAA. He assured the staff that NACA does not have to register its aircraft with CAA. Thus, NACA will be the prime sponsor; it does not mean that all personnel need be NACA personnel. The story will be that they initiated action for various research studies with AWS and the latter will actually do the work and will have the majority, if not all, the personnel sponsoring the activity.

5. The obvious question, of course, is "Where did NACA get the aircraft?" Dr. Dryden stated that NACA normally gets its aircraft from the USAF and in fact they now have the Bell X 1 rocket and the XF 1 rocket for experimental purposes. Their having the U-2 would not cause any undue alarm in or out of Air Force channels. NACA would state that the craft was originally designed for a classified program and that due to the fact that the craft's capability met the requirements of weather reconnaissance, a number were released by the Air Force for NACA use. It was agreed by those in attendance that inquiries, requiring answers, would in all cases come from within the Air Force and primarily from within AWS itself. Initially, questions will be answered with the statement that aircraft were procured for weather reconnaissance and where the obvious doubt is displayed, a statement will be furnished as being confidential,

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6. It is planned that the weather reconnaissance data obtained will not be classified and when publicized it will be stated as having been obtained in the region between 50,000 and 55,000 feet. This is the known capability of the opposition and if he did get the cover story he would not become alarmed over our capability.

7. In a matter of a week an announcement will be made concerning the U-2 and the aircraft will be displayed possibly at Moffett Air Force Base for a brief instant. It is planned that the aircraft will land at Moffett just before dusk and immediately placed in a hangar and the following day will take off once again prior to dawn. This will reveal the configuration without close scrutiny. The press release referred to above will consist of only a few lines something to the effect that the Air Force has produced the U-2 reconnaissance type aircraft. Following this AWS and NACA will announce either jointly or separately to interested institutions that they have the capability of gathering upper atmosphere data in greater quantity than they obtained

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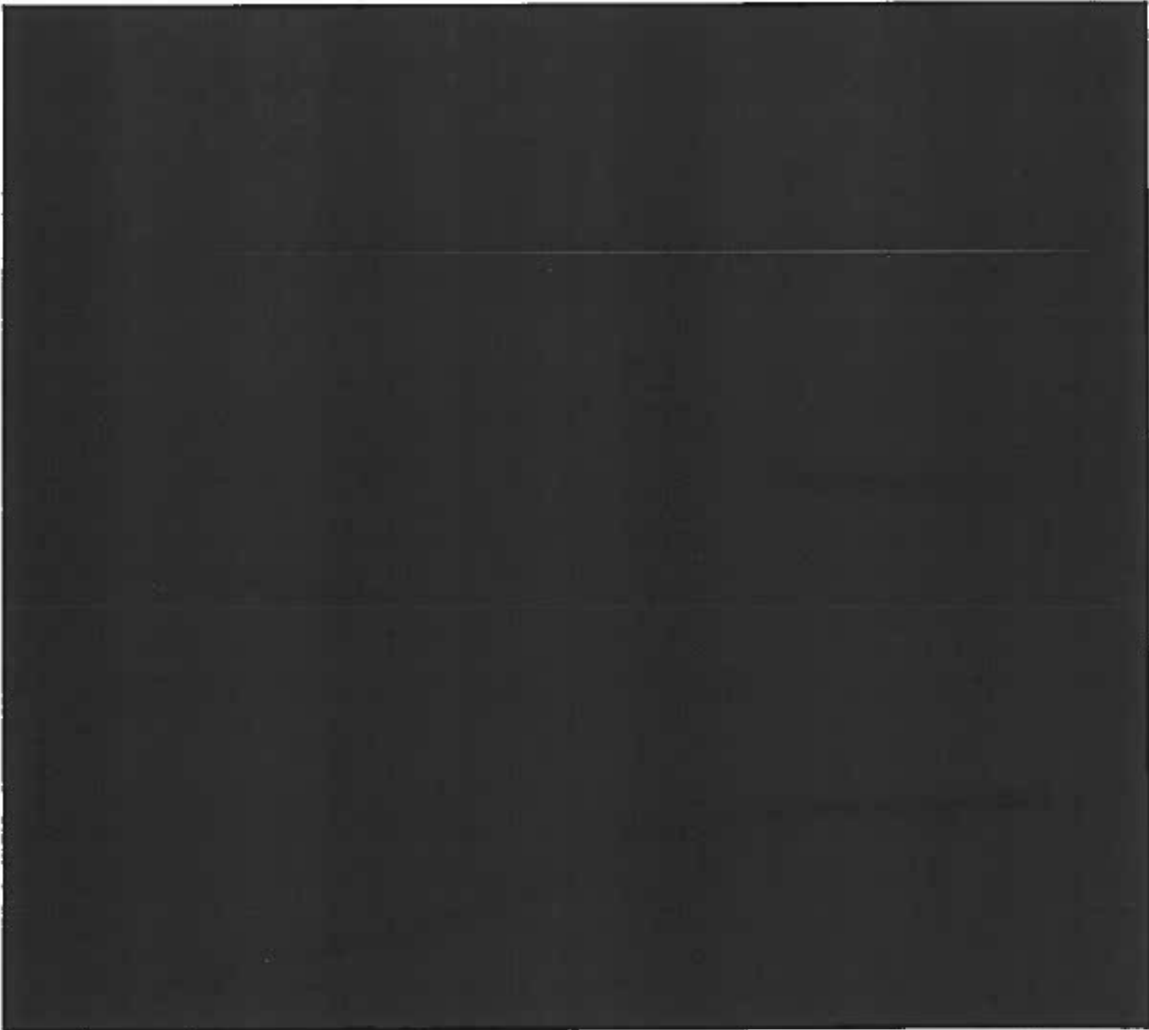
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through the use of balloons. The capability will again be referred to as 50,000 to 55,000 feet. Questions concerning the vehicle raised by this group will not be specifically answered since they will have already advised that the specifics are classified by the Air Force. In line with this, persons of general rank within the Air Force which would logically be questioned by the press or others concerning the U-2 will be advised not to give out any information because of the crafts association with a classified program, [REDACTED]

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10. I have been personally following the progress of this cover story and it is my personal opinion that a very true and complete job has been done. I have examined it for possible loop-holes and to date

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I have found none for which corrective action has not been taken. I would, however, appreciate your personal views and the views of the Security Office senior staff so as to bring us together on approving a final story before official publication.



Assistant Project Security Officer

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