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17 October 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: SE/IO/USSR

SUBJECT: AVIANS Project Evaluation

Following demonstrations and briefings on 7 thru 9 October 1975, by ORD and contractors [redacted] on the AVIANS project, the undersigned has prepared below his comments and recommendations vis-a-vis use of AVIANS techniques on specific intelligence collection efforts inside the Soviet Union.

As it is understood by the undersigned, the requirement can be summarized as follows: The AVIANS platform (bird) carrying a sequential camera, must perform low level aerial reconnaisance flight over a specified target area. The photographic results should be significantly better than that available from other sources at this time. The bird will be dispatched from an automobile located about five miles from the target area. The bird must then fly directly to the target area, accomplish the mission, and then proceed to the home base area approximately 50 miles away. The pre-mission training of the bird must be accomplished using only photographs and interior mockups (if required). Actual operational details re deployment and other phases to be outlined in detail later.

None of the demonstrations seen by the undersigned were totally applicable to the requirement outlined above. Several birds did make a photographic pass against a mocked-up antenna from a range of 1-3 miles, and other birds made short range (1 mile) overflights at low altitudes while photographing. Photographic product from these flights has demonstrated that it is within the capabilities of the camera system to obtain the desired results. However, the present camera is not reliable.

The demonstrations did show the feasibility of training birds to accomplish relatively complicated tasks similar, at least in part, to the scenario outlined above. The

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contractors, when presented with the sterilized requirement as outlined, were quite positive that pigeons could be trained to do the job.

The undersigned feels that it is highly probable that the AVIANS project can produce an operational platform within one year. It appears slightly less certain that a reliable camera can be available in the same time frame. This subject is being investigated presently by ORD.

The undersigned recommends that a test situation be set up which is very similar to the situation described in the requirement outlined above. Specifically, it is recommended that the Agency facility at [redacted] be used as the target area, with the birds to "home port" at the Agency's South Building or Rosslyn complex. With these two fixed parameters, it is felt that a satisfactory and complete operational scenario can be evolved which would test the feasibility of this approach and, if successful, could provide a cadre of trained birds for the actual operation.

[redacted]
OTS/SDB

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