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TACANA-TCT Meeting - 20 November 1975

1. The first meeting of the TACANA TCT was held on 20 November 1975, with members and observers from SE Division, OTS, ORD, and the NIO/SA.

2. It was reported by [redacted] (DDO/OPS Staff) that TRB approval had been obtained to expend funds for the Project. Barry Kelly (NIO/SA) advised also that the DCI had been briefed on the Project.

3. It was agreed that ORD will consult with an independent expert regarding the expected behavior of birds when transported to a widely differing environment. At the request of SE/COPS, the Team agreed to consider a preliminary and limited test of the birds' adaptability to the Moscow environment as a part of the test program, to be run concurrently with planning for the Washington test scenario, unless the results of ORD's consultations mentioned above and/or results of early contractor testing are sufficiently conclusive as to make this test unnecessary. This decision will be made by the Team at the earliest possible date, but no later than mid-February.

4. ORD reiterated that its budgeted allotment of $100,000 would suffice to pay the contractor for training and miscellaneous expenses involved in the Washington test scenario. ORD further estimated that, if the Washington test is successful and we proceed with the actual operation, the contractor's costs to re-train the birds for the operation would be in the $50,000 - $75,000 range.

5. There was considerable discussion of the need to improve the performance of the camera to be used in the operation. ORD estimated that the cost for optimizing two cameras for the Washington test would be approximately $30,000, to be funded by ORD. This includes fitting an improved lens (wider aperture) and re-engineering the film advance mechanism. Also discussed was the possibility of using high resolution film (slower speed) and the resultant need for a faster shutter speed. The bird harness for the camera, camera attitudes and photo sequence rate will be determined in conjunction with the bird training phase and in coordination with the contractor. OTS/VOB AND OTS/VEB will provide support for the camera work.

6. As soon as possible a sub-test will be run to determine whether the analysts will have any significant problems with mensuration of bird photography and relating it to existing phototography. ORD will work this out with the contractor.

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7. There was considerable discussion of the limitations that will be imposed by Soviet realities on our ability to train the birds to recognize and fly to our ultimate target. It was reiterated that the training for the actual operation will be done in the U.S., using slides and mock-ups. The birds would then be transported to [redacted] for several weeks getting acclimated to the new environment prior to the actual mission. Accordingly, the Washington test scenario will impose similar restrictions to make it as realistic as possible, i.e., the birds will be trained from slides and mock-ups, will be transported [redacted] to the Washington area, and will not be allowed to fly free in the Washington area ([redacted], before the test flight. ORD advised that the contractor has two types of pigeons on hand (homers and Russian high flyers) and has a loft and test grounds picked out. ORD estimated that the test could take place in April 1976. Subsequent re-training of the birds for an actual operational mission could take two to three months.

8. It was agreed that [redacted] of SE Division and [redacted] of OTS would prepare an operational scenario for the Washington test. They will seek assistance from DDS&T analysts and other components as necessary. It was decided that henceforth the team should be a relatively small working group which would pursue the project, prepare periodic reports on progress and call meetings of interested components from time to time for consultations. At the suggestion of SE/COPS, [redacted] of OTS was named Team Chairman, and [redacted] of SE Co-Chairman. The following personnel will be team members:

ORD: to be named
OTS/VOB: [redacted]
OTS/VEB:
SE/TO:
SE/RR:
OWI/PAD:
OSI/NED:
IAS: to be named

9. Based on discussions at the 20 November meeting and subsequent individual conversations among team memebers, an outline of the requirements for the test program has been drawn up by the team chairman and co-chairman and is attached herewith.

[redacted]

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Detailed below is the requirement for a test program to demonstrate the operational utility of the AVIAN asset. This test program is to be labeled TACANA/TCT Task #1.

1. TACANA/TCT Task #1 is to develop a valid test program which will allow a subjective determination by DDO/SE of the feasibility of utilizing the AVIAN asset to perform photographic intelligence collection missions against denied area targets.

2. In order to accomplish Task #1, the TACANA/TCT will solicit adequate information from SE Division to design a denied area operational analog in the continental United States which will simulate an actual operational scenario. For the purposes of this analog, the contractor facilities in California will be considered as a safe training area in the United States. For example, the metropolitan Washington area will correspond to a denied area capital, an agency building in Washington will simulate the safe haven, and the [redacted] will represent the actual target area. The actual target must be defined as a discrete element of the target complex, and should be a key feature of the target area lending itself to use as a stimulus for the asset. All representation of the analog target area to the contractor in his training phase will be made utilizing the same type information and support which would be realistic for a denied area. Thus, it will be accepted that there will be no access to the safe haven or target area for any AVIAN asset prior to the period of acclimatization during the analog test, nor will the contractor have access to the target area.

3. To train the AVIAN asset, certain restrictions must be accepted by the contractor in compliance with the already stated restrictions to realistic operational conditions. There will be no full-scale outside models of the target area that would be recognizable by a photo analyst from overhead photography as a mock-up of the actual target complex. This should not preclude, if required, using a limited full-scale outside mock-up of a finite portion of the target area as a target acquisition stimulus, so long as said mock-up does not violate the stated restriction.

The contractor will be provided photography of the target area (and safe haven area if required) which will not exceed the resolution limits of KH-8 photography.

4. A detailed operational scenario for the analog test will be presented to the contractor no later than 1 January. During the analog test, this scenario must be followed as precisely as possible, to maintain the integrity of the test. This shall include the method of transport of the AVIAN asset to the safe haven, familiarization period at the safe haven, secure deployment of the asset equipped with camera in the target area (from a vehicle either stopped or moving), target acquisition and photographic mission performance of the asset and subsequent independent return to the safe haven, and, finally, transport of the asset back to the controlled training area.

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For purposes of the analog test, the safe haven holding area should be considered to be approximately 100 by 50 feet, with a 25 foot ceiling.

5. Within the confines of the TACANA/TCT task #1, the task will be considered completed a) as soon as a determination is made by the TCT that the AVIAN asset will be unable to perform the analog test, or b) when the asset completes the analog test. If the analog test is completed, then a qualitative determination of the relative success (or lack of success) of the collection mission will be made by SE Division. In this consideration, SE should employ TCT's draft Final Report to evaluate the validity of the test. The results of the SE evaluation and determination should be reported in writing to the TCT for incorporation in the TACANA/TCT task #1 Final Report prior to publication.

6. During the actual conduct of the TCT's work on Task #1, it will be the responsibility of the TCT members representing SE to ensure that the restrictions and details of the test scenario conform to realistic operational parameters, but not place unrealistic restrictions which might jeopardize the chances of a favorable outcome of the test. The ORD TCT representative has the responsibility to keep the TCT informed of the progress of the training of the asset, so that modifications of the test scenario which do not violate the primary principles can be made in a timely manner.

7. It should be understood that if the TCT must address itself to any follow-on operational effort utilizing the AVIAN asset, such work should be the subject of separate tasking. This is necessary to avoid incorporating unwanted bias to the test.

8. For purposes of fixing some variables, it will be accepted that the distance to the safe haven to the target is ca 50 miles, that the distance from the release port to actual target is 2 - 3 miles and that the target resolution required of the photography is 1/2".

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