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16 March 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: North Vietnamese Protests over Alleged Airspace Intrusion

1. Per our 15 March conversation, attached is a note sent me by my associate [redacted]

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2. As you probably know, OLYMPIC MEET [redacted] and OLYMPIC TORCH [redacted] missions are flown with SAC-controlled U-2s. The TORCH tracks run well out into the Gulf so unless there was egregious (unadmitted) pilot error on one of them, a TORCH mission could not have intruded within the 12-mile buffer zone, let alone over North Vietnamese territory. The MEET tracks snuggle considerably closer to the buffer line. The possibility of inadvertant error (or erroneous ground -- i. e., North Vietnamese -- plotting of a U-2's position) is thus commensurately greater, particularly in the case of offshore islands which are easy to clip a little close. Our uniformed colleagues who fly these planes, however, insist that no such slips have occurred.

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3. I talked to [redacted] this morning who said he had in hand the memorandum on the GIANT SCALE overflight request we sent down last night, it was exactly what Henry wanted and would probably be sent to the President. Dick said he had flagged the point I raised in last night's phone call about our inability to guarantee no inadvertant intrusion into Chinese airspace, particularly as the aircraft was turning near Dong Dang. In our conversation, Dick agreed with my opinion that -- given the current state of Sino-U.S. relations -- the Chinese would probably be fairly relaxed about any small airspace intrusions that were clearly inadvertant and non-hostile.

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4. Dick confirmed that receipt of the GIANT SCALE package clears our board on pre-Acapulco departure requests from Henry.

[redacted]

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George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

[redacted]

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