

~~SECRET~~

18 OCT 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR The Vice Chief of Staff, USAF

SUBJECT: Space Recovery Responsibility

Further to our recent discussion concerning programmed transfer of space recovery responsibilities and aircraft from the Air Force Systems Command to the Air Rescue Service of the Military Air Transport Service, I have reviewed this entire subject.

On close examination, it is evident that some of the apparent advantages of such a transfer will not be realizable in practice. Assigning the aircraft in question to a command having a larger fleet of the same basic aircraft will not provide better support to either the recovery operations or the other responsibilities of the command, since the aircraft in question must be specially modified with unique recovery gear to carry out the air catch recovery operation. Neither unmodified C-130 aircraft nor aircraft configured for ground recovery missions are interchangeable for use in the air catch mission. This special modification includes not only the installation of the recovery equipment within the fuselage but also includes special engine modifications which provide power for the recovery equipment. The modification cost for each aircraft is [REDACTED]

Programmed operations will preclude utilization of these air catch aircraft in other missions. These operations include, in addition to scheduled recovery operations, substantial requirements for the recovery fleet to hold in a ground alert status. In addition, there is a continuing training requirement, since it is necessary to maintain a very high degree of proficiency on the part of all pilots checked out in the air catch operations. This is imperative, since the entire cost of all equipment and operations which precede an individual recovery may easily be lost by lack of sufficient pilot skill at the crucial instant of recovery. In order to qualify as recovery pilot of these aircraft, current requirements are 25 successful training recoveries, requiring 70 hours flying time in training in the air catch

12 F 82 E5000-851

2 7
1 2
631031

~~SECRET~~

aircraft. After initial qualification, a minimum of eight successful recoveries per month is required of all recovery pilots to maintain the qualification. These requirements not only affect the availability of the air catch aircraft for other missions, but preclude the substitution of other C-130 pilots into the air catch operations.

I also find that the aircraft utilization actually realized is outstanding, particularly in view of the limitations imposed by substantial ground alert requirements, and it is difficult to see how transfer could in any way improve this performance. The flying time during the last 12 months has averaged over 62 hours per aircraft per month, for the seven aircraft assigned.

I think we must consider the proposed transfer in the light of its effect on critical national effort associated with the mission of the air catch recovery unit. In this regard, I cannot see that the proposed transfer will make the job better, easier, or more responsive in any way. Neither can I see how such transfer can make any of these present resources available for any substantial employment on other missions. On the other hand, the involvement of an additional command with the present effort, will unavoidably introduce additional echelons of command and coordination.

It is my conclusion that the proposed transfer should be cancelled and the recovery unit retained in its present assignment. I will be happy to discuss this further if you desire.

Signed

Brockway McMillan