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March 5, 1958

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT  
March 5, 1958

Others present:                   Dr. Killian, Director Brundage  
  Mr. Rockefeller, General Persons  
  Mr. Harlow, General Goodpaster

The meeting was concerned with organization for the conduct of civil space programs. Dr. Killian reviewed a memorandum on this matter. He stressed the need to make use of existing facilities and competence, the limited scope of military applications of space activity as presently foreseen, the need for a civilian agency to handle the civil aspects, with Department of Defense (ARPA) handling the defense aspects. He indicated the recommendation, to use the NACA, substantially reconstituted and made responsive to Presidential direction. ARPA would be the coordinating point in Defense for contact with NACA in this matter.



He brought out that there have been other proposals, which have not been so favorably regarded. One involves the use of the AEC; a second is the constitution of a new agency consolidating both Defense and non-Defense activities; and a third is to center the operation in the Defense Department. He mentioned that a committee will be needed to coordinate the work of the NASA ("National Aeronautics and Space Agency", the reconstituted NACA) and the work of Defense (ARPA).

The President said he had several comments. Since 1947 we have used committees in many areas to effect coordination. These have failed badly to give necessary control of activities, including control of money. He said he has asked himself how we should use space activities for our national purposes. It seems to him that military activity on space projects is acceptable in the area of application of knowledge. He feels certain, however, that discovery and research should be scientific, rather than military. He felt that there is no problem of space activity (except ballistic weapons) that is not basically civilian, recognizing that application of findings may be made to serve military purposes.

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Dr. Killian thought it would be important to arrange that both ARPA and NASA will bring projects to the President for approval. The President confirmed that NASA should report to the President while indicating that broad responsibility will have to be carried by the director of that organization.

Dr. Killian made two final points. It will be essential that the Department of Defense make facilities (such as missile test facilities) available for NASA use. Second, NASA must be in the dominating position with respect to space activities.

There was some suggestion that a better name than "agency" might be found for the NASA -- "institute."



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