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25 June 1965

MEMO FOR MR. BUNDY
DAVE KLEIN

SUBJECT: Berlin Helicopter Problem

1. JCS Position. After informal scouting in the Joint Staff, I have a little better picture of the situation. There was some pressure to recommend shooting down a helicopter, especially from the Air Force, but the seriousness of such an action, the vulnerability of our position, and the lack of allied enthusiasm combined to rule out that course.

Possible reprisals against our helicopters were not a consideration -- although the Chiefs have recommended that flights be continued, there have been no US flights authorized by DOD since December.

2. Extent of the Provocation. There have only been three brief flights over West Berlin and one over Steinstucken. The last of these was on 18 June. Under these circumstances we have not been able to generate much allied support for drastic action. Of course, there have been 27 flights over East Berlin in violation of air rules. Action is necessary, but it is hard to come up with something appropriate.

3. Harassment. Since flights over West Berlin have been so seldom, it is questionable whether we can catch one in time to harass it. The following military moves short of a shoot-down could be considered:

- a. Send a flight of military jets to Berlin.
- b. Fly jets past the helicopters to cause severe turbulence.
- c. Buzz the helicopters with propeller driven aircraft (however, the helicopters might shoot our planes down).

4. Danger to Berlin Population. Any harassment over West Berlin could cause an accident involving injury to civilians as well as aircrews. The ground would have to be carefully prepared to avoid an unfavorable reaction on the part of even our allies.

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5. Possible Major Crisis. With regard to Berlin, anything we can do the Soviets can do better. They may have planned for a Berlin crisis to draw off US effort from Vietnam and Latin America. If we harass helicopters, they may well harass the corridors. If we shoot down a helicopter, they may announce a temporary closing of the land routes in retaliation. In those circumstances it would be doubtful whether we could find much allied support for military action.

6. Conclusion. In light of the above, any contemplated drastic action should be addressed by both State and Defense in considerable depth.



R. C. BOWMAN

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25 June 1965

MEMO FOR McG B

SUBJECT: East German Helicopter Flights

The JCS Berlin helicopter paper was one that I decided to route to Dave instead of to you, but since the matter continues to be serious you might like to scan the JCS views yourself.

The Chiefs advocated a diplomatic approach to the USSR and sanctions of one sort or another against the East Germans. They also suggested restrictions on Soviet Bloc personnel in West Berlin as another means of pressure.

There aren't any real good ways to block a helicopter short of shooting it down. If we shoot one down, we will most certainly have one of our own aircraft shot down, thus jeopardizing our very vulnerable air communications routes with Berlin. We would be pressing very close to a Berlin conflict situation. Two questions come to mind:

- a. Are the East German helicopter flights a serious enough threat to warrant the grave risk of a Berlin conflict?
- b. Are there other less serious countermeasures that we can try first before actually attacking a helicopter?

Dick

R. C. BOWMAN

Dave has asked me to generate some thinking in the DOD on methods of harassing helicopters that could be used to raise the tension level and thus increase our leverage on the Soviets.

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