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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 12, 1960

MR 76-51 #430

Date 11/11/77

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Problems of the B-70 Project



The B-70 is to be the most advanced aircraft, in speed, altitude, and range. It is also to be the most complex one, far more so than a missile, for instance. Its development involves a new fabrication concept in air-frame construction -- brazed stainless steel. It requires a new engine, now under development, and an unorthodox airframe design. At least the crew and equipment compartment will have to be airconditioned because the aircraft will get nearly red-hot due to its high speed.

An additional problem is posed by the design of an adequate bombing and navigation system that takes into account the very high speed and altitude of the aircraft.

However, the great amount of work already done indicates that, after extensive flight-test experience, these problems will be solved.

In a different category is the development of the defensive ECM equipment which appears to be beyond the present state of the art and has been suspended. Judging by experience with other aircraft, it is not possible to accelerate the development arbitrarily by adding more and more funds - flight testing and aircraft modifications required thereby need time and thus 1965 is about the earliest time that operational B-70 would be developed.

The criticisms of the B-70 project rest not on doubts that eventually it could be developed, but on justification for developing it.

The contractor estimates that the cost of the first hundred aircraft will be \$4.1 billion, and experience with such estimates suggests that the actual cost may be nearly double, i. e. some \$70 million per aircraft.

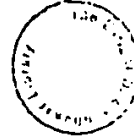
In flight, the B-70 will be a very visible target for radar and infra-red devices and hence subject to detection at great distances. This will facilitate the problem of interception, despite its high altitude and speed.

The B-70 is not well-suited for air-alert because of high fuel consumption, and is to depend on rapid take-off for its protection against

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surprise attack, hence an early warning. It is by no means sure that early warning can be made wholly reliable because of spoofing, etc.

Putting it crudely, it is not clear what the B-70 can do that ballistic missiles can't - and cheaper and sooner at that.

  
G. B. Kistiakowsky

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