



NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE THE NATION'S EYES AND EARS IN SPACE

Headquartered in Chantilly, Virginia, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) develops and operates unique and innovative overhead reconnaissance systems and conducts intelligence-related activities essential for U.S. national security.

The NRO was officially established in September 1961 as a classified agency in the Department of Defense (DoD). The existence of the NRO and its mission of overhead reconnaissance were declassified in September 1992.

The NRO is one of 16 Intelligence Community Agencies. It is a hybrid organization, consisting of some 3,000 personnel, jointly staffed by members of the armed services, Central Intelligence Agency and DoD civilian personnel.

The Director of the NRO reports to both the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Defense. He also serves as Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force (Intelligence Space Technology).

To date, NRO has declassified several programs, although most remain classified. NRO does not discuss specific programs or satellite capabilities. Information regarding NRO payloads, capabilities, numbers and names is classified.

CORONA, the nation's first imagery satellite system, was operational from 1960-1972 and declassified in 1995, along with ARGON and LANYARD. CORONA collected over 800,000 images and flew a total of 145 missions. A CORONA satellite is on display at the National Air and Space Museum.

GRAB, the nation's first signals intelligence satellite system, was launched in 1960 and was operational until 1962. The program was declassified in 1998.

GRAB's successor, POPPY, intercepted radar pulses from Soviet systems and conducted ocean surveillance. It was operational from 1962-1977 and was declassified in 2005.

The first publicly acknowledged NRO satellite launch took place at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, in December 1996, on a Titan IV rocket. Prior to December 1996, NRO did not acknowledge its launches. NRO also launches from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida.

The NRO provides the military, the Intelligence Community and policy makers:

- Global situational awareness
- Real-time engagement support
- Signals intelligence and near real-time imagery
- Agile systems
- Access to denied areas