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In Accordance with E. O. 12958

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on NOV 26 1007

(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

15 January 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Request by Smithsonian to Display CORONA Camera

On 7 January, [REDACTED] of NASA called to relay a question he had indirectly heard that originated at the Smithsonian Institute's Air and Space Museum. It seems that the museum curator, [REDACTED] knows that one of the type cameras mounted in the first spy-in-the-sky satellite is sitting around somewhere in Washington. He and the museum's Director, Dr. Nowell Hinnners (who, according to [REDACTED] was at one time briefed [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had attempted to obtain this camera for the museum several years ago. [REDACTED], Al Flax, [REDACTED] and Art Lundahl were proponents of making such a gift. It was decided to offer the camera to the museum on the condition that it would be handled as a collateral secret item.

The museum, of course, could not accept the camera with such a restriction, so the camera, still classified collateral secret, sits now in a room in NPIC.

The current question being raised by the museum is that, since the declassification of "fact of photographic reconnaissance" in October 1978, would the U.S. Government now reconsider and allow the camera to be declassified and put on display at the Air and Space Museum?

FYI a U-2 camera is now in storage at the Air and Space Museum's Silver Hill, MD facility. On exhibit in the Washington museum is a CORONA re-entry vehicle with the following caption:

"DISCOVER 13.

On display is the actual Discoverer 13 re-entry capsule (with parachute attached) that made 17 orbits of the Earth in 1960. Discoverer 13 was the first satellite to be recovered during a flight.

Discoverer 13 was one of a series of Air Force reconnaissance satellites designed to be recovered after flights in near Polar orbit . . . Launch date Aug 10, 1960. Launch vehicle Thor-Agena . . .

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RECONNAISSANCE SATELLITES.

Reconnaissance satellites play a significant role in maintaining world peace. They enable major powers to obtain detailed photos of each other's air fields, missile sites, and troop concentrations, on a regular basis. The opportunity for a surprise build-up of forces is therefore limited.

In this way these sentries in space have made international arms control much easier."

In an attempt to determine the current Intelligence Community's attitude about declassification and release of the camera I called [REDACTED] Security Officer for [REDACTED] NPIC Security Officer, and [REDACTED] of COMIREX. All made some inquiries within their offices. Good reported back that a decision has not yet been made as to whether the technological state-of-the-art of the CORONA camera is outmoded enough to declassify it. That decision could be made by the NRO.

[REDACTED] replied that this past week the Director of NPIC has received phone calls from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] the latter two also museum officials, asking for reconsideration of the previous negative reply. [REDACTED] cited two memos previously prepared on the same subject. Copies are attached. NPIC's position is that they will do whatever the NRO directs.

[REDACTED] stated that KH-4 imagery was authorized in 1973 to be decompartmented on a case-by-case basis; however, the photos, even after being stripped of codewords, etc., are still handled as collateral secret.

I have promised to give both NPIC and NASA a prompt reply on the 1980 NRO position on this matter. What should I tell them?

[REDACTED]
Special Assistant for
Security

Attachment
Memo for NPIC, 26 Mar 79
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