

~~TOP SECRET~~

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

THE NRO STAFF

September 18, 1969

Dr. McLucas has seen.

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. McLUCAS

SUBJECT: Mr. Denney's letter on Relaxations in the TALENT-KEYHOLE System

Purpose:

To inform you of a letter from [redacted] (State/INR) to Mr. Froehлке which requests, based on Mr. Froehлке's new responsibilities, a reexamination of certain relaxations in the TALENT-KEYHOLE system.

Introduction:

This is certainly not a new issue for the intelligence community or [redacted]. The question of downgrading and decontrol of "the fact of" U.S. satellite reconnaissance activities was addressed in 1966, 1967 and again in 1968. We do not believe that direct action on our part is required at this time; rather, the following information describes the background on this issue and forwards a copy of [redacted]'s letter. (TAB D)

Background:

On April 4, 1966, Mr. Schultze (Director of the Budget) and Dr. Hornig (Science Advisor to the President) sent a letter to Secretary Rusk, asking him to investigate the national security problems raised by NASA's proposed earth-sensing program. The NSAM 156 Ad Hoc Committee was reconvened by Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, and on July 11, 1966 issued its final report. The key relevant recommendations:

Handwritten signature and date:
9/18

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1. The NRP must continue to be protected.
2. The validity of the original (1962) satellite reconnaissance policy was reaffirmed.
3. The USIB should review the possibility of placing references to the U.S. operational satellite reconnaissance program at the SECRET or TOP SECRET security level and that satellite photography should be examined for possible release from codeword control.

On July 28, 1966 USIB assigned COMOR the task of reviewing the possibilities for downgrading and decontrol of satellite reconnaissance references and products suggested by the NSAM 156 Committee. On August 25, 1966 the USIB considered COMOR's findings. Mr. Helms stated that he was firmly in support of "maintaining our classification system as tight as possible," but approved a six-month test period after which the problem of downgrading would be reassessed (Tab A). [redacted] (State COMOR member and Acting USIB member) non-concurred with the COMOR recommendations.

On May 1, 1967 COMOR submitted its findings to the USIB based on the six-month test period. The USIB agreed, in principle (Tab B), to:

1. Acknowledge the fact of a U.S. satellite photographic reconnaissance program at the SECRET level.
2. Permit use of intelligence derived from exploitation of satellite photography (but not the film itself) in SECRET or TOP SECRET publications, identifying the source as "satellite photography."

On July 7, 1967 Admiral Lowrance (Acting Director, DIA) sent a memorandum to the DCI which stated that Secretary McNamara had been briefed on the downgrading and decontrol issue and felt that "the advantages are not clear at this time and that acceptance of this proposal may erode the advantages which might be gained at some future time on the surfacing of U.S. and Soviet satellite photography." On July 20, 1967 USIB circulated a memorandum stating that, "After con-

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sideration of Secretary McNamara's views the CIA member and the Chairman of USIB have non-concurred in the COMOR recommendations. . . " This concluded USIB's disclosure discussions in 1967.

The subject of downgrading and decontrol was dormant until September 9, 1968 when Ambassador Bohlen, Deputy Under Secretary of State, forwarded a State/ACDA paper, "Disarmament Aspects of Satellite Reconnaissance Policy," to the members of the NSAM 156 Committee for discussion at a meeting scheduled for September 16, 1968.

The paper stated, "While not essential to the conduct of the disarmament talks, it would be highly desirable to downgrade the fact that the U.S. conducts reconnaissance satellite operations from its present classification of TOP SECRET TALENT-KEYHOLE to UNCLASSIFIED. "

Prior to the scheduled NSAM 156 Committee meeting the USIB met to consider the State/ACDA paper. In concluding the discussion of this issue, Mr. Helms stated that his position was "that there should be no change in the classification of reconnaissance satellite operations or the information derived from them at this time. He added that "while he was sympathetic to the disarmament effort, at the same time he felt we were responsible for the safety of U.S. intelligence interests and if we agree to any downgrading the door will be open. " (Tab C)

The NSAM 156 Committee met and recommended that the Executive Committee of the Committee of Principals* be asked to approve guidelines concerning consultations with the Senate, Allies, Soviets and the public.

ACDA prepared a draft position paper, "Related Aspects of Satellite Reconnaissance Disclosure Policy," for use by the U.S. SALT delegation. The paper specifically excluded discussion of downgrading and decontrol of the fact of U.S. satellite reconnaissance activities.

*The Committee of Principals is an interagency group formed to advise the President and the NSC on policy matters relating to arms control and disarmament. Members: Secretary of State; Secretary of Defense; Director, ACDA; Chairman, JCS; Chairman, AEC; DCI; Spec Assts to the President for National Security Affairs and Science & Technology.

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Concurrent with the diminishing interest in SALT talks the concern over downgrading and decontrol of "the fact of" diminished. With the revitalization of SALT activity this spring, ACDA submitted a position paper, very similar to the September 1968 paper, to the NSSM 28 Steering Committee. The paper again specifically excludes the issue of downgrading and decontrol of "the fact of."

Present Situation:

On September 8, 1969 [] Acting Director, INR (State), sent a letter to Mr. Froehlke (Mr. Helms and Admiral Showers, DIA, also received copies) stating that Mr. Froehlke "May wish to explore the question of certain relaxations in the TALENT-KEYHOLE system..." (Tab D) [] suggests that the DOD might now agree to the implementation of the USIB decision of April 27, 1967 which would:

1. Acknowledge the fact of a U.S. satellite photographic reconnaissance program at the SECRET level.
2. Permit use of intelligence derived from exploitation of satellite photography (but not the film itself) in SECRET or TOP SECRET publications, depending on the content of the intelligence, while identifying the source as "satellite photography."

You will note that [] has not addressed the 1968 discussions on this issue. Mr. McNamara had departed the DOD by that time and it was Mr. Helms who again, as he had done previously, took a very strong position against the downgrading and decontrol of "the fact of" U.S. satellite reconnaissance.

We have been informed by Mr. Froehlke's staff that Mr. Froehlke made no commitment with regard to this issue during his discussions with [] during a visit to State. [] is apparently basing his request on Mr. Froehlke's new responsibilities in DOD intelligence resources management and the preliminary indication that Mr. Froehlke will review security compartmentation. It must be emphasized that it is not Mr. Froehlke but the DCI who is, under statutory provisions for the protection of intelligence sources and methods, singularly responsible for the BYEMAN and TALENT-KEYHOLE systems.

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Recommendations:

We do not believe that direct action is required on this issue at this time. We will, however, contact the staffs of Mr. Froehlike, Mr. Helms, and Admiral Showers to monitor their consideration of this issue. We will inform you of any significant activity as it may develop.


JOHN R. MECEDA
Captain, USAF

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29 August 1966

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR HOLDERS OF USIB-D-41.12/23

SUBJECT : Recommendations 18(6)(9a) and 18(6)(b) of the
11 July 1966 Report of the NSAM 156 Committee

REFERENCE : USIB-D-41.12/23 (COMOR-D-7/51)
17 August 1966, Limited Distribution

1. In restricted session at the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) meeting of 25 August with the Deputy Director, National Reconnaissance Office (DD/NRO) in attendance, the Chairman, Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR) began the Board's consideration of this subject by a brief explanation of the reference report. He noted that when COMOR had looked at both of the recommendations it found that the ultimate disposition of either item was not crystal clear at this time. COMOR, however, had been able to reach unanimous agreement on an initial procedure for dealing with Recommendation 18(6)(b). In discussing Recommendation 18(6)(a) involving the question of removing the fact of the U. S. satellite reconnaissance program from codeword control to a SECRET or TOP SECRET classification, Mr. Tidwell commented that on the surface it may seem silly not to do this since the Russians know that we have such a program. However, looking at the problem in detail, COMOR (except for the State Member) felt that there was such a danger in uninformed discussion of this program that it would be better to clear a few additional State and NASA people so that any discussion would be based on accurate knowledge. After these additional people had been cleared and had looked at the situation, COMOR would in six months see if the problem had been solved or whether there was a need to take further steps.

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WORKING PAPERS

GROUP 1
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no to Holders
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(COMOR-D-7/51)
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2. In response to the Chairman's request for reactions, the Acting State Member said that he hoped the other members had read Tab A of the reference which was a good expression of State's point of view. [redacted] then called attention to some of the features of the COMOR report as follows:

a. Regarding the first sentence of paragraph 2, he did not think this was a true statement. First, there were many indications that the Soviets do have an adequate idea of the success of the U. S. satellite program. Secondly, we will never know whether the Soviets developed their very good system by their own efforts entirely, or whether there have been some breaches in our security controls.

USA does not have such information

b. With reference to the third sentence of paragraph 2, which states in effect that removal from compartmental controls of the fact of the program or of its product would "increase the security risk," [redacted] pointed out that nowhere else in the COMOR report was there an explanation or discussion of how the security risk would be increased. He thought this was the \$64 question that the Board should address. Nevertheless, the report does mention but does not balance two existing security risks which would be reduced by relaxation: (a) the third sentence of paragraph 3 does mention the existence of loose talk by uncleared officials but the report does not discuss how serious this problem is and (b) the last two sentences of paragraph 3 mentioned but did not weigh the existing risk of warnings by TALENT Security Officers to uncleared persons.

3. [redacted] then observed that the COMOR report contains no discussion of the benefits of the relaxation of KH products, such as general convenience, cost, saving, mapping, shortcuts, the importance to NASA, etc. In short, since there was no discussion and weighing of the security risks as against benefits of various kinds, [redacted] believed that the report is not responsive to the USIB request to give "due consideration to the broad implications of the NSAM 156 Report from the intelligence viewpoint. "

*Security is never imposed to cause:
Time
Money
Energy
Security is expensive.*

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4. On the merits of the question the Acting State Member felt it was important to distinguish between relaxation concerning the fact of the program and relaxation of controls on the products:

This is an error. In 1960 we were advertising it to Soviets who would not be detected

a. On the fact of the program: in 1960 the problem was to keep the existence of the program secret from the Soviets because of the danger that Soviet knowledge of it might bring some kind of retaliation. In 1966 the problem is completely different; that is, to avoid official public statements about the program which might jeopardize national policy to gain international acceptance of it. Today the Soviets have knowledge and have not retaliated--hence that part of the problem has disappeared.

b. On the protection of the product, there have been a number of reasons for that. One was to keep the fact of the program secret, and this reason no longer applies. The second reason was to conceal the quantity and quality of the program, and it seems that the Soviets know most of the essential facts on these points. The third purpose in 1960 was not to give the Soviets help on developing their own program. Now we could give them the KH-4 product and probably the camera and not help them much.

CIA has no such info.

5. [] agreed that the analogy to COMINT in justifying special compartmented security measures existed in 1960 but argued that no such analogy pertains in 1966 for two reasons. First, revelation of the fact of the program or its product now will not cut off the source. Second, unlike policy on COMINT, it is Government policy to gradually gain world-wide acceptance of satellite photography.

But getting acceptance should be recognized as secondary to getting product

6. The Acting State Member said that one sometimes hears the argument, and he understood that it was made in the COMOR discussions, that once a paper has been classified then the burden is on those who wish to downgrade it to show some positive benefit. [] believes this overstates the intent of Executive Order 10501 which underlies the whole classification system and which in Section 3 calls for avoiding overclassification and in Section 4 for continuing review of classified material to downgrade or declassify that which no longer requires security protection in order to protect the integrity of the system. He expressed the concern that continuing to hold the fact of the reconnaissance program in a special security compartment is prejudicial to the integrity of the system.

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7. Although the COMOR report does not do so, the Acting State Member believed that USIB should weigh the security risks versus the benefits as follows:

a. With regard to relaxation of the fact of the program, on balance State proposes a SECRET level for the three propositions specified in the next to the last paragraph of Tab A. [] thought that accepting something close to that formula would enhance the security of the system.

b. Regarding relaxation of the product, he thought that as to the KH-4 product, the original reasons for special handling have been greatly eroded. Therefore, there is much less security risk to weigh against the many benefits to be gained. [] said that he was prepared to leave to the special Tidwell committee the question of how fast and how far to go in downgrading.

8. General Davis commented that it seemed to him that [] had some good arguments. On the three propositions General Davis thought in the not too distant future these might be a good plan. However, he understands that what NASA wants and how they plan to use it is not clear. Therefore, General Davis believed that the COMOR Recommendations were the appropriate initial steps, after which the Board can consider the problem following NASA study.

9. The DIA Member believed that most of the comments by [] were applicable to the paper the Board had previously considered on Security Handling of Satellite Reconnaissance Materials.* In defense of COMOR, General Carroll mentioned that the Board did get into the pros and cons in considering the earlier paper. Speaking of NASA, the DIA Member thought that it was all the more urgent to hold the line on the existing system since we did not know just how far they might want to go at this point. General Carroll was concerned that we might rapidly be on the way to losing our intelligence shirt, and felt that we should be most cautious about relaxing security controls until we could review the full intelligence implications in a more practical perspective. Regarding downgrading to SECRET, the controls over

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*See USIB-D-41. 12/15 (COMOR-D-7/42) 13 September 1965;
 USIB-D-41. 12/18 (COMOR-D-7/45) 13 June 1966; USIB-D-41. 12/19
 (COMOR-D-7/47) 11 July 1966.

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dissemination of this classification are practically nonexistent, therefore, General Carroll believed that the fact of the program would then be known all over the Government. He agreed that the COMOR Recommendations were only an interim action, but he did not believe that we should go farther at this time.

10. The Chairman asked that the minutes show that the Acting State Member had made an extremely able presentation of the State Department viewpoint. It was thoughtful, tactful and on the mark. As to the broad implications of the NSAM Committee's Recommendations, however, Mr. Helms thought that the Board had now looked carefully at those. The Chairman said that he would like to close consideration of this item by accepting the majority COMOR Recommendations in USIB-D-41. 12/23 which he understood the other Members of the Board, except the Acting State Member, approved.

11. Mr. Helms then expressed his feelings on this matter. He noted that it was very complicated, and that a lot of issues as well as departmental questions and interests were involved. He stated that by temperament he did not like the necessity for compartmented handling, and he hoped that sometime soon the community can get a more rational means. However, we do have the system which has been in existence for some years. Mr. Helms emphasized that we are now heavily dependent on satellite photography and therefore we now have to adhere to the protection of that asset by minimum changes in our classification system. Mr. Helms recognized that the effort of the policy makers to push for the acceptance of satellite photography was a proper course of action. However, he believed that the intelligence community was right in taking a restrictive view on relaxation. He pointed out that the Soviets had known we were flying the U-2 over the USSR but never said anything publicly about it until one had been shot down. He thought that the same attitude would apply to our satellite reconnaissance. Mr. Helms said he would not like to embarrass the Soviets by telling them how good our photography of the USSR is. Moreover, Mr. Helms stated that regarding KH-8, he did not have the slightest doubt that this was a real breakthrough which he thought we must keep and cherish. Mr. Helms noted that recently when he had testified on this subject

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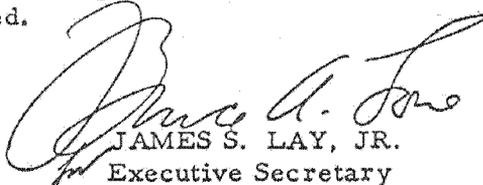
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before Congressman Mahon and his CIA Appropriation Subcommittee, he had been very severely enjoined to keep this very valuable intelligence asset as secret as possible. Mr. Helms stated that, last but not least, as Director of Central Intelligence, he was charged with the security of intelligence sources and methods, and would therefore have to come down in support of maintaining our classification system as tight as possible.

12. In light of the above discussion, the Chairman determined that, based on the consensus of USIB except for the Acting State Member, the COMOR Recommendations in paragraph 6. a. , b. and c. of USIB-D-41. 12/23 were approved.


JAMES S. LAY, JR.
Executive Secretary

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Policy: 18 Points ✓
Functions: NASAUSIB-D-41. 12/23
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UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT : Recommendations 18(6)(a) and 18(6)(b) of the
11 July 1966 Report of the NSAM 156 CommitteeREFERENCES : a. USIB-D-41. 12/21 (COMOR-D-7/48)
— 14 July 1966, Limited Distribution
b. USIB-D-41. 12/22 (COMOR-D-7/49)
29 July 1966, Limited Distribution

1. The Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR), meeting as an ad hoc group to study the subject recommendations (circulated to USIB Principals by reference a.) in response to paragraph 8 of reference b., has submitted the attached report for consideration by the United States Intelligence Board (USIB).

2. Recommendations by COMOR for Board action are contained in paragraph 6 of the attached memorandum, along with the footnote thereto on page 6 in which the State Member of COMOR concurs in Recommendation 6 c. but does not concur in Recommendations 6 a. and 6 b. for the reasons set forth in Tab A hereto.

3. The attached report will be scheduled on the agenda of the USIB meeting for 25 August 1966.

James S. Lay, Jr.
JAMES S. LAY, JR.
Executive Secretary

Attachment

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GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification

Attachment
SIB-D-41.12/23
(COMOR-D-7/51)
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MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, United States Intelligence Board

SUBJECT: Recommendations 18(6)(a) and 18(6)(b) of the
11 July 1966 Report of the NSAM 156 Committee

1. COMOR, meeting as an ad hoc group for the purpose of studying recommendations 18(6)(a) and 18(6)(b) of the NSAM 156 Committee's report, has recognized that the intelligence community is facing a rapidly evolving situation in which it must continue to conduct the necessary reconnaissance in support of priority national intelligence requirements. This new situation is created in part by the following:

a. The successful execution over a period of approximately six years of a satellite reconnaissance program that has resulted in repetitive coverage of the entire Sino-Soviet bloc and in at least one-time coverage of over ten and a half million square miles of the earth's surface outside of the Sino-Soviet bloc. The impact of a program of this size is felt far beyond the confines of the intelligence community.

b. The implementation of a large-scale program leading to the establishment of a highly accurate world-wide geodetic net which has resulted in coverage of most of the earth's surface by DAFF photography and other applicable photography taken by the index camera systems of reconnaissance vehicles.

c. The successful acquisition of spectacular photography of large portions of the earth's surface by the NASA GEMINI program operating on a completely unclassified basis.

d. Publication of other unclassified photography of the earth, moon, and Mars as a result of unclassified programs conducted by the United States and the Soviet Union.

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e. A considerable increase in interest on the part of other Government departments and agencies, and on the part of the United States scientific community, in the contributions that can be made to scientific and technical problems by the use of earth sensing devices carried in satellite platforms. This interest has led to and has been encouraged by unclassified discussion by NASA of some of the applications that might be considered in a NASA-operated program.

f. The growing awareness that the Soviets are conducting a satellite reconnaissance program.

g. The publication of numerous articles in scientific and technical journals, and in the public press, describing or purporting to describe various aspects of the United States satellite reconnaissance program.

2. Against this background the intelligence community has operated a security system which appears to have been successful in preventing the Soviet Union from adequately assessing the successes achieved by the United States reconnaissance program. The intelligence community has also developed an elaborate set of procedures which has made it possible to use the information obtained by satellite reconnaissance for a wide range of purposes without undue security risk. In view of our success in achieving widespread use of our reconnaissance products while at the same time maintaining essential security, we are reluctant to recommend steps that would increase the security risk to our national reconnaissance program without having a very clear idea of the benefits to be obtained by such an increased risk.

3. Both the State Department representatives and the NASA representatives consulted by COMOR have stated that they would derive considerable benefit in the conduct of their business if they could discuss the fact of reconnaissance at SECRET or TOP SECRET level. It is clear, however, that all of NASA managerial problems in this regard could not be met unless the fact of reconnaissance could be discussed on an unclassified basis. State Department representatives also point out that there is a risk to both the U. S. political position and to the security of the U. S. reconnaissance program as a result of inadvertent error on the part of personnel who are not aware of the fact of our reconnaissance program

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or the requirement to keep it secure. The Department's representatives feel that if the necessary U. S. officials could be informed of and could refer to the fact of reconnaissance on a SECRET or TOP SECRET basis, they would be prevented from making these inadvertent mistakes. The State Department's position is supported to some extent by the practice of TALENT Security Officers who warn uncleared intelligence personnel who may have engaged in dangerous speculation concerning the U. S. program. The warning amounts to tacit confirmation of the fact of the existence of a U. S. reconnaissance program.

4. At the present time the Department of State (less ACDA and AID) has a total of 173 personnel who are cleared for BYEMAN or TALENT-KEYHOLE information and thus have some knowledge of the U. S. satellite reconnaissance program. NASA has a total of 124 cleared for these same categories. Since the admission of the fact of U. S. reconnaissance at the SECRET or TOP SECRET level is an action that cannot be reversed, we believe that it would be advisable first for the State Department and NASA to see if the internal managerial problems causing them to favor the release of this information could be handled by granting an increased number of T-KH clearances to key personnel in their departments. If after an adequate practical test this approach does not solve the problem, we believe that the intelligence community should consider authorizing TALENT Control Officers to brief selected personnel at the TOP SECRET or SECRET level concerning the fact of U. S. reconnaissance. This has already been accomplished in the case of briefings given to NATO members and certain heads of State.

5. Recommendation 18(6)(b) concerns the use of T-KH photography by NASA and asks that the problem be examined in terms of the selective removal of appropriate photography from codeword control or, alternatively, clearance of an increased number of NASA personnel in order that they may use the photography under existing codeword controls. In our examination of this problem we have concluded that it is too early to decide the optimum manner for NASA to exploit KH photography. We have concluded instead that the problem should be approached on a step-by-step basis and that the nature of the final step should be determined at a later date on the basis of experience acquired in the completion of the intervening steps. We can foresee at least the following at this time:

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a. Clearance of a panel of personnel, selected by NASA, representing all of the various disciplines of interest to NASA, this panel to be thoroughly briefed in the material now under codeword control and on the various exploitation efforts currently being employed by cleared personnel.

b. If after Step No. 1, NASA and the intelligence community conclude it to be desirable, Step No. 2 would be the establishment of a TALENT-KEYHOLE center at NASA headquarters and possibly at the NASA Manned Spacecraft Center at Houston. This would permit NASA to receive its own copy of reconnaissance materials collected within the KEYHOLE system and would enable them to request the clearance of additional numbers of personnel to study the products and to become thoroughly familiar with both the products and exploitation procedures under codeword control to determine if further exploitation by NASA is desirable or feasible.

c. Step No. 3, the exact nature of which cannot be determined at this time, would be developed on the basis of experience required under Steps 1 and 2 above and might include the development of procedures for the sanitization, decontrol, downgrading, or declassification of certain types of KEYHOLE material, the actual sanitization or downgrading to be accomplished by NASA within the TALENT-KEYHOLE centers established under Step No. 2 above as approved by the DCI.*

6.** Recommendation. It is recommended that:

a.** To meet the recommendation in NSAM 156, 18(6)(a), the Department of State and NASA select an increased

*It should be recognized that any relaxation of strict security controls to accommodate NASA would also apply to other Government agencies who have similar needs for wider use of reconnaissance products.

**See footnote on following page.

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number of key personnel for clearance in the TALENT-KEYHOLE system to see if the risk of uninformed discussion can be controlled by this means.

b.* COMOR review the situation at the end of six months to determine whether the problem has been solved or whether there should be a briefing of additional persons at the TOP SECRET or SECRET level.

c.* To meet the recommendation in NSAM 156, 18(6)(b), NASA be invited to select a panel representing those scientific and technical disciplines of interest to NASA to be cleared for access to TALENT-KEYHOLE information in order that they may study current TALENT-KEYHOLE materials at NPIC and exploitation procedures used by NPIC, the Mapping, Charting, and Geodesy community, etc., and make recommendations to NASA concerning the desirability of increased NASA participation in the TALENT-KEYHOLE program.



William A. Tidwell

Chairman

Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

*The State Member concurs in recommendation 6c as a means of providing further clarification of NASA needs and closer coordination with the intelligence community. He agrees to this first step without prejudice to the Department's previously stated position concerning the selective decontrol of satellite reconnaissance products. For reasons set forth in Tab A, the State Member does not concur in recommendations 6a and 6b, believing that removal of the fact of a U.S. satellite reconnaissance program from codeword control would enhance our political and security interests.

Attachment:

Tab A

6

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SIB-D-41.12/23
(COMOR-D-7/51)
17 August 1966
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Tab A

Department of State Comment on
Recommendation 6a of NSAM 156 Committee Report

The State Member believes it is increasingly clear that the system is diverging from its original purpose, and that the divergence is likely to grow in the next five years or so.

At the time of the September 1960 Presidential Directive there was a critical need to hold very closely all evidence of the operation and the product in order to conceal the existence of the program. At that time, the U-2 incident was still fresh, and it was prudent to impose elaborate controls over products in order to keep the fact that the program was getting under way from becoming another international cause celebre. At the time the U.S. was concerned lest any revelation of the fact of a satellite reconnaissance program lead to Soviet efforts 1) at interference, 2) at camouflage, or 3) to use it to bring pressure on the U.S. to desist or to embarrass the U.S. at international forums. Thus, the objective of the elaborate measures begun in 1960 was to exercise careful control over the knowledge of the fact of satellite reconnaissance in order to prevent leaks and premature disclosures from interfering with a long range goal of getting the Soviets to accept satellite reconnaissance as a fact of life, and ultimately as a legitimate and perfectly legal activity.

Thus, the original purpose for elaborate control of the fact that the program existed was to protect the program from adverse foreign, and especially Soviet, reaction. Today that purpose would be better served by a far less restrictive classification on the fact that the program exists. The danger today is not of clandestine compromise of the simple fact of space reconnaissance, but of ill-considered public statements. The Soviets know we have a program; no one is concealing the fact from Brezhnev or from the readers of his speeches. It is important to protect the program from public statements which could elicit adverse foreign reactions or generate pressures for disclosure of detailed information.

A large and growing number of American officials who are not privy to the T-KH system know or can very reasonably infer that there is an American satellite reconnaissance program. What they do not know is that they are not supposed to talk about it, and they may not understand how considerations arising from that program bear upon their own work.

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OSIB-D-41.12/23
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Tab A

One suggestion mentioned at the COMOR meeting was to clear many more people. This seems imprudent, and even self-defeating to the purpose of compartmentalization. Many of the people in the increasing number of civilian agencies which are developing an interest in satellite photography do not have a need to know the highly sensitive aspects of the T-KH system. And some may for a variety of reasons not qualify for clearance to T-KH materials.

It seems much more logical to adjust the classification to meet the needs. Namely, the State Member suggests a SECRET classification for these three propositions: 1) the U.S. has a classified satellite reconnaissance program, 2) because this program is a valuable national security asset, details are kept highly classified and are not available to personnel without special clearances, and 3) it is a matter of national policy that the subject of satellite reconnaissance not be discussed in public by American officials.

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Another suggestion made at the COMOR meeting was for a sort of junior T-KH clearance, consisting of a statement about the fact that the program exists, to be read to individuals whose names would be recorded. Upon reflection, we are convinced that this would be needlessly restrictive. We believe that it would be much more useful to permit reference to the existence of the American program to appear in classified papers as required. This will be useful here in State as well as in other agencies where considerations of how certain programs or policies may touch upon the reconnaissance program will have to be reviewed. We believe that clarity in internal government papers at the SECRET level will be extremely useful in assuring that the national interest in the reconnaissance is borne in mind by those who might otherwise neglect that consideration. The fact of satellite reconnaissance is already known at the SECRET level; the State Member believes that we are not contributing materially to security by keeping specific reference to the existence of a U.S. program from being made at that level, so much as we are risking muddling questions on which we have the greatest interest in clarity.

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TCS#9534-67/iHANDLE VIA TALENT/KEYHOLE
CONTROL SYSTEM JOINTLY1 May 1967
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UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR HOLDERS OF USIB-D-41.12/25

SUBJECT : Decontrol and Downgrading of Satellite Photography

REFERENCES : a. USIB-D-41.12/25, (COMOR-D-7/56),
27 March 1967
b. USIB-D-41.12/26, (COMOR-D-7/57), 6 April 1967

1. In restricted session at the 27 April United States Intelligence Board (USIB) meeting, with Mr. Reber of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) in attendance, Admiral Taylor, as Acting Chairman, opened the discussion by noting the complexity of the problem and requested that Mr. Tidwell provide the Board with an explanation of the two related papers in the references having a bearing on this item.

2. Mr. Tidwell explained that the review of the Manual for Sanitization, Decontrol and Downgrading had indicated that sanitization procedures had been fairly successful but there were a few specific problems that could be resolved. He then noted that the Ad Hoc Committee report which deals with possible procedures for decontrol and downgrading of T-KH materials presented several alternative courses of action. If the Board accepts one of these proposed courses of action the Chairman of the Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR) recommended that his committee be charged with working out a detailed plan for implementation before final Board acceptance. Mr. Tidwell recommended against the acceptance of a procedure that would downgrade the actual T-KH photography.

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Memo to Holders of
 USIB-D-41. 12/25
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3. Admiral Lowrance, the Acting DIA Member, expressed the view of the JCS and DIA in stating that he was agreeable to the liberalization of the controls with changes in the Sanitization Manual but that if a proposal were made to downgrade the T-KH photography itself, this detailed plan would have to be staffed fully in the DoD.

4. The Acting CIA Member commented that it was the agency view that the photography itself should not be downgraded and he believed that the other Board Members might agree. [] further explained that CIA felt it important for the protection of the T-KH classification as a whole to acknowledge the fact of the existence of the photographic satellite reconnaissance program at the Secret level. The CIA proposal would then permit use of intelligence derived from exploitation of satellite photography (but not the film itself) in Secret or Top Secret publications, depending on content of the intelligence, identifying the source as "satellite photography".

5. Dr. Smith then proposed that USIB approve these measures in principle and task COMOR to prepare a manual containing guidelines for use of photographic intelligence in non-codeword issuances. Upon USIB approval of these guidelines, use of information in Secret and Top Secret publications would commence.

5. Admiral Lowrance asked if under the concept outlined we could expect to be able to use pictures derived from T-KH photography under Secret or Top Secret classification. Mr. Tidwell felt that a procedure to permit this could be handled through the prescribing of rules by his committee, which would involve sanitization of the photography but not include an actual frame of the film.

6. [], the State Member, raised the question of how we would handle the increasingly difficult problem of public awareness of the satellite reconnaissance program. Many people in government who are not authorized to know about it are talking about the program - under present rules it is not possible to explain to them its sensitivity. Security considerations are turned around with the news media providing explanations without restrictions while proper authorities are unable to react to protect the sensitive aspects of the program. [] argued that acknowledgment at the Secret level allows the explanation of the sensitivity of this program to some U. S. government people but does not provide a means to deal with the public.

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7. The Acting Chairman asked [] if he were proposing going to the extreme of recognizing the unfortunate disclosures of the existence of the program on an unclassified level. [] replied that he still found it difficult to see how we could credibly brief people as to the sensitivity of the program at the Secret level following the President's discussion of the program with the Tennessee Educators' and their wives as well as recent Air Force press statements about the role of satellite reconnaissance in targeting for bombing against North Vietnam. Dr. Smith noted that the President's statement was intended to be off the record, while the Air Force statements on weather reporting by satellite were unclassified.

8. General Carter observed that in many ways this problem parallels the one that exists in the SIGINT field where news media have on a number of occasions talked about NSA's operations.

9. The Acting Chairman expressed the opinion that the Board would be in a better position if it developed a reasonable system that could be justified and defended in order to avoid placing the whole compartmentalized security program in jeopardy.

10. [] hoped that the "common law" on satellites would continue to develop, and he agreed that a gradual awareness by the public of the fact would be desirable. He would be concerned about the adverse impact that could be caused by an abrupt public announcement, especially if it caused a reaction by the USSR or France. He felt however, that it was hard to make a credible case to any briefee that the fact was still Secret.

11. Admiral Taylor pointed out that even though we are aware of the constant revelation of classified data, we still try to keep such matters classified in government.

12. Mr. Reber suggested the following statement for possible use within the government at the Secret level: "That it is the policy of the U. S. Government not to confirm or deny publicly the existence of a satellite photographic reconnaissance system which is classified Secret". He suggested you could then go on to explain that it is also policy that information derived from the system could be utilized at the appropriate classification, but that the methods or products of such collection are highly sensitive and cannot be revealed.

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13. The Acting Chairman then asked other Board Principals for their comments on this problem. General Carter said that he was concerned as to what effect the Board's deliberations could have on NSA's information. General Yarborough was in favor of the proposal to acknowledge the existence of a satellite reconnaissance program at the Secret level but did not know how to approach the public on this question. Admiral Taylor thought that it was not necessary at this time to confront the problem of informing the public. [] however, suggested that it was; since in all kinds of meetings with the public government personnel were dealing with academicians and others who believed the fact of satellite reconnaissance was in the public domain. Admiral Taylor suggested that the background briefing method might be used to meet this type of a situation.

14. Admiral Fluckey said the Navy had a similar problem with information as to which of its ships carry nuclear weapons; when the classification is lowered, there is even greater pressure to declassify it. However, he did go along with the CIA recommendation to reduce classification on the fact that a satellite reconnaissance program existed to the Secret level. [] expressed Air Force concurrence with the proposal to classify the existence of the satellite reconnaissance program as Secret. Admiral Lowrance also felt this was the best approach.

15. Admiral Taylor then reviewed the proposal made by the Acting CIA Member. He pointed out that the thrust of the proposal was to answer the questions posed in paragraph 8 of Mr. Tidwell's ad hoc committee report. CIA has proposed saying "yes" to the question "Should the fact of a classified satellite photographic reconnaissance program be confirmed at the Secret level?" The Agency also proposes to permit use of intelligence derived from exploitation of satellite photography at appropriate classification of Secret or Top Secret, but recommends against the downgrading or release of the actual film. In addition CIA would request COMOR to prepare for approval by the Board very carefully drawn guidelines as to what material could be used outside the T-KH system.

16. The AEC Representative agreed with the CIA proposal to permit broader use of T-KH material within government, but saw no necessity to either confirm or deny the existence of a satellite reconnaissance program to the public.

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HANDLE VIA TALENT / KEYHOLE
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Memo to Holders of
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 1 May 1967
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17. The FBI Representative expressed the opinion that our prime effort should be to protect the fact of how successful the program has been and the detailed assessment of our capability with this system.

18. [] invited comments on the possibility of classifying the fact "Official Use Only" or "Confidential". Admiral Taylor pointed out that if this approach were taken there would then be pressure to get the classification of product down to "Official Use Only". What is proposed by CIA is that the lowest level to which the material can be classified would be Secret. [] noted that [] had called attention to the legal definition of Secret in Executive Order.

19. Admiral Taylor summed up the consensus of the Board as being agreement in principle at this time to:

a. Acknowledge under a Secret classification the fact that a satellite photographic reconnaissance program existed.

b. Charge COMOR with the task of writing detailed guidelines as to how the intelligence product from T-KH photography could be used at the Secret and Top Secret level outside the compartmented system.

20. The Acting Chairman, while recognizing State's reservations on these proposals, indicated that [] could still raise the problem again since the Board would again consider this item after COMOR had prepared a detailed plan.

21. Mr. Tidwell asked if the Board wished COMOR to outline how the fact of satellite reconnaissance should be handled in briefing people on this subject or whether this should be left as a command function within agencies. ✓ Admiral Taylor said he would rather leave the determination of how to apply the rules to the individual agencies.

22. The AEC Representative suggested that a rationale as to why the fact that a satellite reconnaissance system exists is under a Secret classification must be developed in order to have more guidance on how to deal with the public. [] said that he would welcome comments on this point. He also thought that release from the T-KH system of some past photography at the Secret level might be valuable in protecting the more sensitive photography.

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23. Mr. Tidwell said COMOR has already looked into the question of what existing photography might be released. While no technical secrets would be lost by the release of KH-5 and index camera photography, technical secrets would be lost if KH-4 photography was released and he strongly recommended against downgrading that in original format. Admiral Taylor agreed but felt that this problem should still not prevent use of the intelligence derived from KH-4 photography under proper classification.

24. Accordingly the USIB agreed in principle to the following:

a. Acknowledge the fact of a U. S. satellite photographic reconnaissance program at the Secret level.

b. Permit use of intelligence derived from exploitation of satellite photography (but not the film itself) in Secret or Top Secret publications, depending on the content of the intelligence, while identifying the source as "Satellite Photography".

In addition the Board tasked COMOR to prepare a manual containing guidelines for use of photographic intelligence in non-codeword issuances. On submission of the COMOR report in about two weeks, the Board would again consider this item before deciding what further action would be authorized.

James S. Lay, Jr.
JAMES S. LAY, JR.
Executive Secretary

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UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR HOLDERS OF USIB-D-46. 2/6

SUBJECT : Decontrol and Downgrading of Satellite Photography

REFERENCES : a. USIB-D-46. 2/6, 11 September 1968
 b. Memorandum to Members of the NSAM 156 Committee, subject: Draft Report on Disarmament Aspects of Satellite Reconnaissance Policy, 9 September 1968
 c. USIB-D-41. 12/28 (COMOR-D-7/44-5), 23 May 1968, Limited Distribution

1. In executive session at the 13 September USIB meeting with the Deputy Director, National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) in attendance, Admiral Taylor outlined for the Members the principal points in the draft report on Disarmament Aspects of Satellite Reconnaissance Policy (reference b.) which is to be considered by the NSAM 156 Committee. He noted in particular that the draft report in the section dealing with Formal Security Procedures stated that while not essential to the conduct of the disarmament talks, it would be highly desirable to downgrade the fact that the United States conducts reconnaissance satellite operations from its present classification of "TOP SECRET - TALENT-KEYHOLE" to "UNCLASSIFIED". He said that the report further argues that this action would greatly facilitate consultations with our Allies and with Congress; would ease the conduct of the negotiations themselves; would simplify the preparation and dissemination of intelligence analysis; and would be necessary at some stage in presenting the proposed agreement to the press and the public.

2. Although the draft report stated that the information on the results of reconnaissance satellite operations, and information relating to those operations, should continue to be subject to the restrictions of existing classification systems, Admiral Taylor suggested that verification in a disarmament agreement would include the use of satellite photography and that the proposal ~~as~~ outlined in the draft report would make the task of controlling the reconnaissance photography much more difficult.

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3. Admiral Taylor then suggested that as an alternative the USIB consider approving the proposal submitted by Mr. Tidwell in his memorandum to USIB (reference c.) which had been non-concurred in as a result of Secretary McNamara's opinion that the advantages were not clear at that time and that the acceptance of the proposal might erode the advantages which might be gained at some future time by the surfacing of U. S. and Soviet satellite photography.

4. Mr. Reber said that the objective of Admiral Taylor's proposal was not clear inasmuch as in the first instance it did not respond to the State Department paper directly and second it offered a proposal bearing on the handling of reconnaissance material which really was not asked for in the State Department paper. On the subject of the State paper, Mr. Reber said he found it difficult to comment because of a lack of clarity; thus on page 5 of the draft, mention is made of the "Soviet acceptance" of the U. S. National Means of Verification. Did this mean that they would agree not to interfere with the operation of a low resolution photo satellite whereas they would be free to interfere with the operation of other reconnaissance devices? Mention is also made of observation satellites without specification as to whether this is confined only to photo reconnaissance or to other sensing satellites. Mr. Reber added that he did not believe any simple statement to the Congress or to the public that the United States was relying on satellites for verification would be accepted without further evidence of the validity of the assertion. Once the subject were addressed, he believed that there would be a great deal of questioning and it would be very difficult to withstand pressures to give out more and more information about satellite reconnaissance. As for the Soviets, they are said in the draft paper to be already knowledgeable of our satellite reconnaissance. Mr. Reber wondered why, then, it was necessary for the U. S. to admit this fact to them.

5. Admiral Taylor suggested that some of the points identified by Mr. Reber were policy matters for which the NSAM 156 Committee was responsible and that USIB should focus its attention on the handling of reconnaissance information. He said that after reading through the COMOR paper, the guidelines outlined therein seemed logical and he again proposed that USIB consider that report. General Carroll invited attention to that portion of the proposal which states "while not essential it would be highly desirable to downgrade the fact that the U. S. conducts reconnaissance satellite operations from its present classification of 'TOP SECRET - TALENT-KEYHOLE' to 'UNCLASSIFIED' ". He felt that the issue, then,

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related to a highly desirable as distinguished from an essential objective and the pros and cons should be considered in this perspective. He pointed out that it has long been recognized that the Soviets and indeed most of the world are fully knowledgeable of the fact of our satellite reconnaissance efforts but at the same time as a matter of considered policy, the U. S. Government has refrained from officially acknowledging this fact because of concern that the present tacit acceptance of this fact by the USSR might be jeopardized if officially confronted by a U. S. declaration. He felt that all doubts should be resolved in favor of preserving this vital and indispensable intelligence source.

6. General Carroll noted that negotiations with the Soviets are not known for their sweetness and light, and they well might break down in controversy in which event we would have assumed the risk of official acknowledgment without achieving a compensating objective. Therefore, he felt it would be best to avoid a premature official acknowledgment of the fact and wait for reasonable progress in the negotiations at which point if necessary the pros and cons of acknowledging the fact could be considered.

7. General Carroll also expressed concern that public acknowledgment would make it exceedingly difficult and probably impossible over time to protect the product and our degree of success. Aside from leaks to the press, General Carroll observed that at the present time in the absence of official acknowledgment there is an advantageous tacit understanding with Congress generally that no questions on the reconnaissance satellite operations are asked. In addition he visualized problems involving increasing pressures for specific information and photography arising with NATO and our other Allies when official acknowledgment is made. Summing up his position General Carroll said that from a security standpoint he would stand against acceptance of the proposal in the draft report to the NSAM 156 Committee.

8. [] said that he favored the position outlined in the COMOR memorandum but pointed out that recent decisions made it necessary for USIB to look ahead to the discussion and public debate that will arise on the question of reconnaissance satellites. He suggested that in light of the Presidential decision to go ahead with disarmament negotiations and the identification of verification as a key element in any disarmament agreement, there was a need to be prepared to say more to the Congress and to the public on reconnaissance satellites. He said that

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USIB should start now working on time-phased formulas to safeguard vital information while at the same time preparing statements to support the negotiations. [] stated that while he held no brief for the language of the draft report (reference b.) he thought it was rather unlikely that the U. S. negotiations would get very far before the subject of verification had to be dealt with and for this reason he was prepared to support the proposal in the COMOR paper. Responding to Mr. Helms' request for clarification, [] said he would support the COMOR proposal now but that he expected that we would eventually have to downgrade the fact that the U. S. conducts reconnaissance satellite operations to UNCLASSIFIED.

9. Admiral Taylor again stated his position as being opposed to downgrading to UNCLASSIFIED but observed that the force of circumstances would probably eventually bring us to it. He said if the USIB expresses opposition to declassification it will be asked for an alternative proposal and for this reason we should review the COMOR paper and be prepared to put our proposals forward.

10. General Carroll said that if a fall-back position was considered desirable he was prepared to consider reducing the classification of the fact that U. S. conducts satellite reconnaissance operations to SECRET, he would have to check with the Secretary of Defense before taking a final position in view of the Secretary's earlier position. As to the COMOR proposal that satellite derived information including attribution as such be downgraded to SECRET he stated that he felt it would be undesirable to effect such a change at this time.

11. [] noted that DIA had agreed with the proposal in the COMOR paper when last considered and asked what had changed its position.

12. General Carroll answered by noting that the present environment was quite different from 1967 and in the event of an arms limitation agreement the intense public interest would be such that the results of our satellite coverage could not be adequately protected at the very wide-spread SECRET level. This would be particularly true where the photography indicated cause for possible suspicion of non-compliance with the terms of the agreement.

13. Mr. Helms said that he did not consider the Board to be in concrete on any matter and that the USIB could convene to review and change its position at any time in the light of events.

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14. He said his position was that there should be no change in the classification of reconnaissance satellite operations or the information derived from them at this time. Continuing, Mr. Helms said that while he was sympathetic to the disarmament effort, at the same time he felt that we were responsible for the safety of U. S. intelligence interests and if we agree to any downgrading the door will be open. He said the only real secret was the resolution attained in the photography but that any downgrading would move us closer to endangering the security of that fact.

15. While not wanting to change the security classification now he said the USIB could keep this matter under review and at any time change its position as events demand.

16. The Board then concurred with Mr. Helms' position that no change be made in the classification of reconnaissance satellite operations at this time, and agreed with [redacted] s proposal to have COMIREX review USIB-D-41.12/28 (reference c.) in light of the Board's discussion and report back to USIB at a later date.

[redacted]
Colonel, USAF
Deputy Executive Secretary

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH
WASHINGTON



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SEP 8 1969

Mr. Robert F. Froehlke
Assistant Secretary of Defense
for Administration
Department of Defense
Washington, D. C.

Dear Bob:

I appreciated your recent visit to INR and our talk on certain aspects of your new role in Defense intelligence. Your assignment is surely a challenging one. In reading Mr. Laird's memorandum of 1 August I note that one of your responsibilities will be to review security policies within the context of eliminating unnecessary classification and compartmentation. In this connection you may wish to explore the question of certain relaxations in the TALENT-KEYHOLE system which USIB has several times discussed.

In April 1967, after long and searching review, USIB agreed in principle that certain relaxations in the TALENT-KEYHOLE system were in order. These would have included putting a SECRET classification on the fact that the United States conducts a satellite reconnaissance program, coupled with permission for broader, more helpful use in intelligence publications of certain categories of information obtained from the program. The contemplated changes were not implemented in view of subsequent reservations expressed by Mr. McNamara. (USIB-D-41.12/28 of 20 July 1967) His concern, apparently, was over the possible implications the USIB action might have on public disclosure, which we consider a separate question.

Our views on the need for changes in the TALENT-KEYHOLE system have been recorded previously in USIB-D-41.12/24 (COMOR-D-7/55) of 15 February 1967 and the Minutes of USIB discussions on this subject. We continue to believe that decontrol and downgrading of the fact of a U. S. satellite reconnaissance program would promote both our political and security interests, and that procedures should be devised to permit broader and more effective utilization of selected satellite photography as well as broader dissemination of finished intelligence on an attributable basis within the U. S. Government.

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We also believe that these steps can be taken without affecting existing policy against public disclosure or prejudicing any possible future changes in that policy which might become desirable. In these circumstances, I would hope that the Department of Defense might now agree that implementation of the USIB decision of April 27, 1967, would be a useful step toward more efficient procedures within the U. S. Government (especially in light of the attention that will be brought to bear on our verification capabilities in connection with the upcoming SALT negotiations) and that USIB should again address the question at an early date.

Sincerely,



Acting

cc: CIA - Mr. Helms
✓DIA - Admiral Showers

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