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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20330



REPLY TO
ATTN OF: CC

SUBJECT: Release of Information on Air Force Satellite Control Facility (AFSC/CC
Ltr, 18 Apr 1974)

TO: AFSC/CC (Gen Phillips)

1. (U) I concur with your recommendation to tell the story of the Air Force Satellite Control Facility (AFSCF) in greater depth. The items listed in Paragraph 3 of your letter appear to be suitable for discussion at an unclassified level.

2. (U) One approach that could be used would be to describe AFSCF support of a relatively unclassified space program. The System Program Office effort could be discussed at SAMSO and then the AFSCF support to that program could be addressed at the AFSCF. This would permit a general briefing of the AFSCF mission, operation, resources, etc. and still allow a detailed examination of how the AFSCF supports a particular program. The "program approach" to the AFSCF could include a tour of that program's control area in the Satellite Test Center pending SAF/OI approval. I believe that the briefings and tour can be accomplished at an unclassified level. The Defense Satellite Communications System II or Space Test Program might be good candidates.

3. (C) Regarding the appropriateness of discussing recovery operations of the 6594th Test Group at Hickam AFB, I would like to reserve the option to treat this as classified until the proposed set of replies to specific questions referred to in your letter have been coordinated with us to insure that we agree on the release of any specific information.

4. (U) This approach has been approved by Secretary McLucas and Mr. Plummer.

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~~(S)~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

April 24, 1974

Mr. Plummer has seen

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. PLUMMER

SUBJECT: Satellite Test Center Publicity

General Phillips' letter to General Brown (TAB A) regarding subjects about the AFSCF deemed suitable for discussion with the Aviation Week staff was passed to AF/RDS for action. Apparently General Brown is favorably inclined towards the idea. This inertia makes it more difficult for AF/RDS to give a negative recommendation; however, we do have an entry since General Brown indicated a necessity for SAFSS and SAFOI involvement in this problem. In addition, we understand that the HQS AFSC briefing on April 22 went well in the sense that SAMSO and AFSCF activities were not discussed to any extent to cause us concern and also there were no commitments made by HQS AFSC regarding subjects/programs to be discussed when the Aviation Week staff visits SAMSO. Therefore, the issue at hand is to determine whether any change in policy regarding release of information on AFSCF is warranted and what the impact of any policy changes would be on NRO operations and security.

Last year we staffed a similar episode when Roy Neal of NBC wanted to interview General Schultz in the context of Air Force space activities. The idea was for Mr. Neal to use the material as background during the SKYLAB mission activities. Among the subjects SAMSO recommended for coverage with Mr. Neal were a visit to the STC including appropriate interviews regarding the STC mission/activities including filming of the mission consoles and also live filming or releasing existing footage of the 6594th Test Group re-entry capsule recovery activities. Working through SAFOI we channeled the approval to allowing emphasis on the weather satellite, navigation satellite, Space Test Program, communication satellite, Titan III and Minuteman Programs. One portion of SAFOI reasoning was that other individuals had

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requested tours of the STC prior to Mr. Neal's request. If the STC were opened up, it should be for a press open house for everyone not just for one person (or organization like Aviation Week). Dr. McLucas noted this and mentioned that he might be in favor of an STC open house if it were feasible. The issue was left there and not followed up. As a result, Mr. Neal's film crew photographed the STC from outside the gate. The film crew was allowed to visit and photograph the weather satellite's transportable tactical van at McClellan AFB. Also General Schultz was interviewed without incident.

On another occasion, SAMSO requested clearance on a classified film about the SCF for showing at the AIAA Symposium in Washington. The film was poorly suited for the occasion and in addition showed scenes of satellite payload recovery operations. We had the film edited to delete those scenes and posed no objection to the edited film's release.

At present there is little information which has been released on the SCF. A generalized mission statement was released in February 1970 (TAB B). Since then there has been nothing released regarding the SCF or STC mission.

With regard to the current Aviation Week Staff situation, we have serious reservations over releasing any additional information about or allowing a tour of the STC and certainly no information should be released on the recovery operations.

There appears to be no area in which the Air Force stands to gain by discussing SCF activities. The SCF is an organization dedicated to supporting on-going space programs. Without SCF support, the space programs cannot function operationally. On the other hand, if the SCF activities are discussed and the STC is toured, the Aviation Week staff members, who are extremely well informed on space activities, will undoubtedly skip over the IDCSP, DSCS, Vela, etc. programs on which they already have information. Instead, with the subject of SCF mission support being opened, they may well ask those unanswerable questions about support to reconnaissance satellites (even about SCF

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support to the NRO). SAMSO spokesmen will be placed in the extremely difficult position of confirming the information (which they cannot do because of security), or denying (which could be untrue) or giving no comment (which is de facto admission).

In conclusion, we believe that changing standing policy to allow SAMSO to discuss SCF activities to the extent described in the HQS AFSC letter to CSAF would gain no benefit for the Air Force and would instead create a situation for further exposure of NRO operations to the detriment of our security.

Recommend that you maintain the position that during the briefings to Aviation Week, AFSC and SAMSO spokesmen not release information on the SCF other than what has been already approved for release and that there be no tour of the STC.

Keith S. Peyton
KEITH S. PEYTON
Captain, USAF

Spencer

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM FOR AFSC/CC (GENERAL PHILLIPS)

SUBJECT: Release of Information on AFSCF

With regard to General Brown's response to you on the AFSCF publicity, I expect that neither AFSC Headquarters nor SAMSO will take any action which will impinge upon the operations of the satellite reconnaissance program. General Schultz and his people should take particular care to avoid situations with the Aviation Week people which would provoke sensitive questions on either the Air Force or NRO programs.

J. W. Plummer
J. W. Plummer

*Check the report out
unbated. It was
dropped may 8 1974*

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May 7/

POINT PAPER

ON

AFSCF PUBLICITY

- AFSC has requested authority to discuss substantial information about the AFSCF operation with Aviation Week.
- The two major areas of discussion would be the SCF satellite control operation and the 6594th Recovery Group operation.
- We requested CIA guidance on this matter at Mr. Plummer's direction.
- CIA believes that satellite reconnaissance activities should not be subjected to the degree of public exposure that is being proposed and that it would be precipitous at this time to open up activities of the STC and the 6594th to any further public exposure.
- The Air Staff believes that most of the STC operations could be safely discussed if a program such as the Space Test Program is used as an example. The Air Staff reserves judgment on the 6594th.
- General Bradburn is against declassifying and disseminating information about the SCF. He believes that any data which would serve to reveal operation details about the tracking

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network and recovery operations are inappropriate since these operations are our only means of retrieving photographic intelligence derived by satellite.

- The NRO Staff believes that an ultra-conservative approach should be followed in that the general SCF operations could be discussed using the Space Test Program and that the Air Force should be highly aware of the problems associated with leading reporters into areas which cannot be fully developed in terms of questions and answers. We also believe that there is risk of over-zealous spokesmen going beyond proper limits of discussion. We strongly suggest that a parallel BYEMAN letter be signed by General Brown which urges a high degree of responsibility on the part of General Schultz and his people for the protection of Air Force and NRO security.

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