[redacted]

From: Hall Cargill
Sent: Wednesday, June 16, 1999 3:15 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] McDonald Robert A. (b)(3)
Subject: Declassification of NASA Lunar Orbiter Payload connection with NRO SAMOS Payload

Secret

[redacted]

On June 2, during a trip to HQ SMC, I had dinner with Merton Davies of the RAND Corporation, one of the originators of the film recovery satellite concept back in the mid 1950s. He inquired whether it would not be possible today to declassify the fact that the Lunar Orbiter payloads launched in the mid 1960s were essentially carbon copies of the SAMOS film readout payloads developed by the AF/NRO and then cancelled in the early 1960s when film recovery proved so successful. Both used EKC cameras and the EKC bimat film that was developed on board the spacecraft, scanned with a CBS "flying spot scanner," and images radioed to Earth in near real time. The Lunar Orbiters demonstrated the near-real-time film readout system with some spectacular images of the moon for all the world to see, though system details and performance were obscured and downplayed at the time, and any connection with NRO systems denied, as I recall.

On my return I spoke with [redacted] about the matter, and he said that because the Lunar Orbiter/SAMOS payload employed an analog image transmitting system and was technically obsolete, he thought it could be declassified if the appropriate organizations agreed to it, namely MS&O/IMG [redacted] and EKC. [redacted] has no objections, and the (b)(3)
EKC rep at the NRO, [redacted] is consulting with his supriors and should supply an answer in the next week or two. (b)(3)
There is doubtless a news release in all of this, if the "fact of" is eventually declassified, but that is in [redacted] (b)(3)
department.

I realize the [redacted] is retiring Friday, hard as that is to believe, and will not be available to consult further on this matter, and I wanted you be aware of the discussion.

Cargill

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