

**NRO Approved For Release**

Speech by

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for the

25th Anniversary of Project CORONA

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Although it's not possible for me to deliver this message personally, this anniversary is of such significance that I felt I must tell you in some manner how we, as a nation, appreciate the task you accomplished a quarter century ago.

Today, as your President, I can request that photographs be taken of almost any area on the surface of this planet and have those pictures in my hands within a few hours. Had I been President twenty-five years ago, this would have been impossible. What made this possible was the hard work and dedication of those who are being honored today.

Because you developed these capabilities secretly within the tightest security, the only recognition you received was the knowledge that you had contributed substantially to our nation's safety during a very dangerous period. Although we must still work within security constraints, we hope in some measure today to redress that long-standing lack of recognition for your achievements.

I would also like to honor that distinguished predecessor of mine, President Dwight Eisenhower, who played a crucial role in the development of overhead reconnaissance. His understanding of the vital contribution that reconnaissance could make our nation's security, like your contributions, has also been hidden from public view.

During his Administration a new generation of photo-reconnaissance technology was developed that radically changed the entire concept of intelligence collection. Improved collection

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vehicles -- first reconnaissance balloons, then high-altitude aircraft, and finally satellites -- resulted in our acquiring an ever-increasing volume of detailed intelligence.

The development of these systems produced radical innovations, both in the technical systems themselves and in the decision to use them in clandestine flights over foreign territories. The risks of detection were great and the political repercussions -- both domestic and international -- that were sure to follow detection were serious. Despite these risks, President Eisenhower decided that to provide for our common defense, this nation needed up-to-date military intelligence from behind the Iron Curtain. It was this policy objective, essential for the security of the republic, that justified the political risks inherent in using these new means of reconnaissance. In retrospect, we now recognize that the dangerous route chosen by Eisenhower to seek the truth through photo reconnaissance was the only plausible and rational way to uncover and assess the Soviet Union's military and industrial capabilities.

President Eisenhower once remarked to General George Goddard, the grand old man of this business, that without aerial reconnaissance: ". . . you would only have your fears on which to plan your own defense arrangements and your whole military establishment. Now, if you are going to use nothing but fear, . . . you are going to make us an armed camp." This is no less true today than in President Eisenhower's time, and I reaffirm his conclusion that the knowledge which only overhead reconnaissance can provide is absolutely vital for the United States.

The Iron Curtain remains a challenge. And we, as a nation, continue to rely on the cooperation among academia, industry, and government to develop new systems for overcoming this unnatural barrier.

I'm sure that if President Eisenhower were here today to see what you have achieved from the programs begun as a result of his decisions he would express a hearty "well done!" America is safer for your work, and I congratulate each of you for so fully earning the gratitude of your countrymen by your remarkable achievements during a long period of continuing peril.

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