

(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C

SECRET

THE NRO STAFF

28 March 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]

Brig. General Bradburn
Brig. General Kulpa

SUBJECT: Security Requirements of the NRO.

Attached is a draft report on the above subject for your review. Essentially it deals with two main considerations:

1. Declassification of the names and initials of the organization and
2. Declassification of the "fact of."

The judgments of the Committee members were unreconcilable and a minority report accompanies the basic effort. Even the basic report requires that very fine lines of release be drawn and an Implementation Annex has been added to insure uniform interpretation.

It would be appreciated if you could review this package in anticipation of a meeting to be scheduled early the first week in April. The meeting will be to impart your views on the present draft or your ideas for modification. Whether we incorporate views of the minority report in the body of the paper or submit it as a minority report will be an item of discussion.

[REDACTED]
Robert D. Sirgel
Chairman
Ad Hoc Security Review Committee

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the Soviets or stimulated them to take countermeasures.

4. After thirteen years of successful operation of the Program, the Review Committee finds noticeable changes in the environment which bear on the feasibility and desirability of modifying security controls.

a. The Soviets have their own reconnaissance satellite program. There is at least a tacit agreement with the Soviets about non-interference with, if not acceptance of, the use of satellites as a "national means of verification" of any strategic arms limitation treaty. Conversely, other nations are questioning the legitimacy of uncontrolled observation from space although the concern is presently focused on ERTS.


b. A large volume of speculative information about the U.S. and the USSR space reconnaissance activities has surfaced in the public domain. Speculative information in the U.S. mass media has been lent credence by mention in a report of the Special Committee to Study Questions Related to Secret and Confidential Government Documents. The appearance of this totality of information has fostered a general recognition in the world at large of the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance from space.

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c. There has been a recent decision to lower security controls on some satellite photography by removing it from compartmented security controls and allowing photography and derived information to be used at the Secret level.

d. The Congress has recently shown a greater interest and curiosity about the NRP than heretofore and at least one knowledgeable committee chairman has stated that it is increasingly difficult to maintain the past practices of limiting knowledge only to committee chairmen and their designated colleagues.

e. U.S. civil agencies have expressed the belief that the space program may satisfy additional needs within their disciplines and interests beyond those already identified. Today, assistance can only be provided if the civil agencies are willing to comply with the safeguards accorded the product materials.

f. Recent trends in the political and judicial spheres of Government argue for public candor unless it can be proved that such candor damages the national security. The present security controls created by classification of the "fact of" do not allow such candor.



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g. The NRO's cover for activities and personnel as a pseudo line element of the Department of Defense may no longer be viable as a result of a recent acknowledgment to the press that the NRO is "an office through which certain intelligence matters are administered...by a senior Air Force civilian official."

THE PROBLEM

5. In consideration of these changes, the Committee examined the appropriateness, advantages, and disadvantages of continuing the uniquely tight security system imposed over the NRP and the NRO at the inception of the Program. While many specific current problems were discussed, it was generally agreed that recent changes in the environment have not altered the need for tight security of the NRP and its activities; however, the recent publicity about the NRO and the official acknowledgment of its existence require that a new public disclosure cut-off point be established. In this regard, it was determined that five issues required resolution. Decisions on the points which follow would dictate the current security posture for the NRO.

A. Whether there is a need to formally declassify the terms, "National Reconnaissance Office" and "National Reconnaissance Program," and their initials.

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B. Whether or not to retain the "fact of" space reconnaissance at the Secret level or to declassify it.

C. Whether Congressional committee chairmen need additional information and guidance to satisfy the inquiries of their fellow Congressmen.

D. What is the appropriate reaction to public disclosures.


E. To what extent can the executive level continue to support strict security control of the developmental and operational phases of the NRO.

DISCUSSION

6. In its considerations, the Committee was continually mindful of the need to maintain secrecy around essential elements of the Program while giving balanced recognition to the fact that time and events may have overtaken some elements of concern for which the security features were originally imposed. A basic thread which ran through all of the considerations was the need to retain a credible security posture by not retaining a classification on information which is no longer sensitive from a national security standpoint and which is already in the public domain. This concern dominated the consideration of these five points.

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A. The Names and Initials

(1) Since the first exposure in 1971 there have been about seven references in the public domain to the National Reconnaissance Program or Office. These were considered speculative reporting since no official source was credited. The revelations were ignored and the lack of follow-up inquiry or subsequent revelations may be indicative of the appropriateness of this course of action. On 12 October 1973, the National Reconnaissance Office was pointedly mentioned in a report of the Special (Congressional) Committee to Study Questions Related to Secret and Confidential Government Documents. Although the committee was unaware that it had used a classified title, this action represents an official acknowledgment of the Office and has been determined to be sufficient grounds to consider the name of the Office unclassified. This position was officially adopted by the CIA in February 1974 when it withdrew legal objection to mention of the National Reconnaissance Office as classified material in Marchetti's proposed



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manuscript, CLA and the Cult of Intelligence.

The Committee is of the opinion that official action should be taken to declassify the name and initials and make this action known to personnel now responsible for security control.

(2) The Committee considered the potential results of such identification. In addition to the anticipated requests for more information from the press and Congress it is expected that there would also be pressure to fit the NRO into a formal organizational structure and dispense with the "cover" that has been used to date. In that event the NRO structure itself would require reorganization since the Director of the NRO is currently "covered" by his dual title of Under Secretary of the Air Force and his headquarters organization is "covered" under the organizational title of "Office of Space Systems, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force." With formal declassification, both the Director and his Staff could be acknowledged as entities of the National Reconnaissance Office and all employees could admit



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their affiliation if such disclosure is desirable. It should be noted that, on the surface, no impact on security has been perceived as a result of disclosures to date.

(3) The discussion of declassification of codewords, mission numbers, etc., evoked a recognition of the technicalities of retaining classification but the Committee decided in favor of the practicality of retaining such classification.

(4) The Committee was concerned that declassification of the NRP and the NRO could lead to an effort to regularize the NRO in conformity with normal organizational structure and procedures of the DOD. Such a move is viewed as detrimental to the efficient and streamlined management procedures now employed by the NRO, and accordingly, detrimental to the responsiveness of the NRO to the national intelligence requirements.

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(5) The present 1965 charter of the NRO represents the joint interests of the CIA and the DOD. It incorporates many of the precepts of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (reaffirmed in 1974) and was developed to assure rapid response to the requirements of the intelligence community. For some thirteen years, the system has fulfilled its purpose well. All managers have had unique authorities but have also been monitored closely in both the technical and financial areas. The system permits concentration of authority in highly capable program offices and dispenses with long lines of approval and control. It was agreed that a relaxing of security should not be the basis for "regularizing."

B. The "Fact Of"

(1) Discussions relating to declassifying the "fact of" showed particular concern in three areas. First, it was agreed that any declassification of the "fact of" / ^{satellite reconnaissance} must be applied only to photographic satellites as they are not as vulnerable

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to countermeasures as the SIGINT systems. Second, it was agreed that implementation of any new policy would have to emphasize that the admission of the "fact of" at either the Secret or unclassified level still excludes any "facts about." And, finally, there was great concern that official acknowledgment of our use of intelligence satellites might trigger the Soviets or third countries to raise political objections in an international forum and thereby hinder our unilateral operations.

(2) The concern with credibility was the primary argument favoring declassification. The large volume of information, particularly in trade journals, has established a general recognition of photographic reconnaissance from space and it is doubtful that the average person concerns himself with the difference between "official" and "speculative" material. It was felt that continued insistence on tight security for "open" secrets reduces overall credibility and erodes the integrity of

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security around the technology and the operations which still need to be protected.

(3) Foreign reaction to an open admission of satellite reconnaissance appears to be the most serious potential problem but it is recognized as one that falls primarily in the political field rather than one to be decided by the security needs of the intelligence system. The most significant threat is the possibility for a U.N. treaty banning surveillance or reconnaissance from space without the concurrence of the country being surveilled or reconnoitered. Various non-aligned countries have expressed significant sensitivities about space surveillance and in fact Brazil has tabled a treaty to regulate observations from space. Recognition of the "fact of" space reconnaissance would likely not derogate the collection mission of the NRO as long as restraints of international treaties do not preclude mission activity and would enhance credibility in our claims on other

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security matters. For these reasons, it appears appropriate to recommend declassification of the "fact of" on security grounds but defer to Dr. Kissinger for the political decision.

(4) It should be noted that the fact that the Government has chosen not to publicly acknowledge the "fact of" has helped to preclude international challenges to the conduct of space reconnaissance. As much can be gained by the method of exposing this decision, specific procedures should be agreed.

C. Brief of Congressional Committees

(1) Congressional committee chairmen have long helped to maintain the security of NRO programs and decided on the need-to-know of the entire Legislative Branch. It is recognized that there has been some difficulty in retaining this security and one recently chairman has/remarked at the difficulty of

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continuing such a posture. However, on query from the press, each chairman has continued his firm support. It is obvious that these men can be relied on to not make their own decisions on classification.

(2) However, the entire Congress has some responsibility for the proper functioning of all aspects of the Government, and the prospect that a heavily budgeted NRO exists is certainly of legitimate interest. To meet this need, it is proposed that a briefing be provided to the chairmen of the appropriate committees which would assure that methods of doing business are essentially the same as those of the rest of the Government, that our track record on overruns and management costs are good, and that audit and oversight provisions are at least as restrictive as those found elsewhere. This would enable the chairmen to pass this information to other representatives at the classified level, according to their desires.

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D. Reaction to Public Disclosures

(1) The need to react to public disclosures remains much the same. Disclosures of classified information are generally ignored but as some information is now available at the unclassified level, inquiries will be answered to the extent now possible. However, as the recommendations of this Committee create a gray area in security where black and white formerly existed, more public disclosures can be expected unless clear cut-off lines are briefed to all holders of [REDACTED] TALENT-KEYHOLE clearances.

E. Executive Level Support

(1) It was recognized that the executive level is often under heavy pressure to respond to queries relating to information in the public domain. If the names and initials relating to the NRO are formally declassified, this could also relate to "facts about" the NRO, its organization, program, personnel, and activities. In spite of this recognition, the Committee believes that all "facts about" the NRO must remain classified.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

7. As a result of these discussions, the Committee recommends:

A. That the terms, "National Reconnaissance Office" and "National Reconnaissance Program," as well as the initials, "NRO" and "NRP," be formally declassified but that no information be revealed about the identity of personnel, the organization, or the programs.

B. That the DCI recommend the declassification of the "fact of" space reconnaissance on security grounds alone but that he point out the potential political problems and defer to Dr. Kissinger for the final decision.¹

¹The NRO Staff Security representative believes other nations will distinguish between the existing "common knowledge" of satellite reconnaissance and an "official" acknowledgment by the Government, even if that acknowledgment occurs only by confirmation of that fact by official records. Such acknowledgment might impel foreign governments to protest officially a matter which had been tolerated when it was widely known but not officially admitted.

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C. That the chairmen of Congressional committees be briefed on any changes prior to accomplishment and that additional information for release to fellow Congressmen at the classified level be provided on the NRO organization and methods of doing business.

D. That information provided in response to queries resulting from public disclosure be in accord with the above recommendations and that all holders of [REDACTED] TALENT-KEYHOLE clearances be briefed on this policy and the continuing need for strict security.

E. That, with the above recommended exceptions, the strict security controls of the [REDACTED] be continued.¹

8. In order that there be no confusion on the interpretation of these recommendations, there is appended a section on implementation which specifies the interpretation intended by the Committee.

¹The representative of the CIA Office of Security does not concur in this recommendation. He believes that concessions can be made to allow declassification of all codewords, program names, mission names, and mission numbers as well as organization, subordination, Agency participation, and personnel of the NRO. He has submitted a minority report which is attached.

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3. Once declassified, there would be no announcement but would be revealed as a matter of course by the DCI, the SecDef or, as appropriate, Public Information Officers, on query.
4. Appropriate Congressional committee chairmen would be briefed prior to declassification.

C. Brief of Congressional Committees

1. The chairmen of the appropriate Senate and House committees and their designated associates be briefed on the management of the NRO, to include
 - a. Procedures for soliciting RFQs.
 - b. Procedures for source selection.
 - c. Degree of adherence to ASPRs.
 - d. Costs, management costs, overruns, and comparisons.
 - e. Provisions for audit.
 - f. Provisions for oversight.
2. The briefings should stress adherence to regulations and procurement guidance but show the manner in which the NRO is able to operate more efficiently than by using normal Government management methods.

D. Reaction to Public Disclosures

1. All holders of [REDACTED] TALENT-KEYHOLE clearances, including PIOs should be briefed to establish the

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new disclosure cut-off lines and reinforce the "no comment" response beyond these lines.

E. Executive Level Support

Implementation would be effected in consonance with D. above.

Attachment
Minority Report [Redacted] 815-74

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