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NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE PROGRAM

Washington, D. C.


September 28, 1971

NRP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



AGENDA

Office of Deputy Secretary of Defense
Room 3E 928, The Pentagon
Thursday, September 30, 1971

1. Status and Plans for EO1
2. Launch Schedule and Days in Orbit
For Photographic Reconnaissance Satellites
3. Releasing the Fact of Satellite Reconnaissance
4. NASA Space Transportation System
5. NASA Earth Resources Mission


F. Robert Naka
Secretary
NRP Executive Committee

Distribution

- 1 Mr. Packard
- 2 Mr. Helms
- 3 Dr. David
- 4 Dr. Hall
- 5 Gen. Bennett
- 6 Mr. Dam
- 7 Adm. Gayler
- 8 Mr. Duckett
- 9 Dr. Martin
- 10 Mr. 
- 11 NRO 

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DISCUSSION PAPER FOR SEPTEMBER 30 EXCOM

SUBJECT: "Fact of" Satellite Reconnaissance

BACKGROUND:

Over the years there has been considerable pressure to declassify or downgrade the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance. The main reasons for initiating the present stringent security practices were twofold: first, to protect the technological and operational aspects of our reconnaissance systems; and second, to prevent the possibility of a diplomatic confrontation with our enemies or causing embarrassment to our allies. As a result, the U. S. Government has never formally and publicly acknowledged the "fact of".

The main reasons offered in support of downgrading or declassifying have been twofold: first, exploitation is cumbersome, difficult and expensive because of relatively limited access to the product; and second, the "fact of" is public knowledge even though the government has not officially and publicly acknowledged it.

More recently, COMIREX has been studying the question of possible downgrading or declassifying. In June, the DNRO sent letters to various interested individuals soliciting their views on the question from the standpoint of impact of disclosure on unique aspects of their organizations.

Responses to the June letters were relatively non-uniform, varying from a suggested notion of negative impact on NASA's programs, if "fact of" were admitted, to an overhaul of compartmentation removing SIGINT from TALENT/KEYHOLE control. State Department expressed no objection to "fact of" admission but emphasized that operational information and resolution require stringent

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protection. Concern was expressed by the NRO on the continued ability to operate within a streamlined management philosophy under "normalization". It was also stated that a unilateral U. S. disclosure might have adverse impact on the ability to continue operation of the NRP.

Mainly because of an overall security problem of policy leakage and concern from the White House, Mr. Helms requested COMIREX to hold its "fact of" study in obedience for the present.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The question of "fact of" admission remains perplexing and largely unanswered. There is speculation on the one hand that public admission of "fact of" would undermine the conduct of the NRP. On the other polar extreme there is speculation that there would be few, if any, repercussions if "fact of" was revealed. The main problem is that if "fact of" is officially admitted, and there are repercussions, the admission is irreversible.

Several on-going actions bear on the "fact of" problem: first, the SALT ratification process may, by default, cause an official admission of the "fact of" in its discussion of means of verification. Second, the Soviets in the UN have given evidence of desiring discussions on the defining of space in terms of national sovereignty and on the establishment of the ethicality and legality of satellite earth resources survey. This is somewhat contradictory to their uncharacteristic cooperation on sharing data from future earth resources missions. This contradiction developed during the NASA-State-Soviet talks recently completed.

Finally, the NSAM 156 Committee recommended to the President that international reaction to ERTS A and B should be assessed in terms of political impact of acknowledged satellite overflights.

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SUMMARY:

It is contended that there would be user benefit gained from a general relaxation of security controls and public admission of satellite reconnaissance. On the other hand, the political instabilities presently evident seem to warrant the exercise of great care and judgement before such an irreversible action is taken.



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DISCUSSION PAPER FOR SEPTEMBER 30 EXCOM

SUBJECT: US/Soviet Space Cooperation

BACKGROUND:

Last summer the US and the Soviets began exploration of ways to cooperate in space. Original US overtures were made based upon precepts contained in NSSM 72, which concerned international space cooperation. In January 1971, working meetings were held in Moscow. Principal US representatives included Dr. Low and Mr. Frutkin from NASA, and Mr. Packard of State.

These meetings culminated in the establishment of three major working groups which formulated cooperation position papers. In August 1971 the working groups again met to make final their joint recommendations.

The subject areas of agreement include three broad themes: exploitation of near earth space, the moon and the planets; the natural earth environment; and space meteorology.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The principals were requested to approve the recommendations by October 6, 1971. Dr. Fletcher transmitted a letter of approval to Academician Keldysh on September 3. Subsequent to that action DDR&E formally posed strong objection to the geographic areas agreed upon for investigation of the natural earth environment, saying that they were strategically critical areas.

A meeting was held on September 28 between high level NASA officials including Dr. Low and Mr. Frutkin, and Dr. Rehtin, DDR&E. As a result of this meeting DDR&E is rethinking its objections and attempting to work through the problem with NASA. It does not appear as if the Fletcher letter of Sep 3 will have to be retracted.

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SUMMARY:

Based upon a Presidential directive the US sought and has achieved a relatively high degree of initial cooperation in space with the Soviets. There appears to be sufficient US awareness of potential impact on satellite reconnaissance activities, thus any exchange of data is to be carefully studied by interagency panels. It is interesting to note that at the outset of the talks a year ago the US was not prepared to discuss exchange of earth resources survey data. This portion of the talks has been based upon Soviet initiative. It is not clear whether the Soviets will continue this philosophy as time approaches for actual earth resources data collection and exchange.



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