

NRO Statement on Small Satellites

1 July 1996

The Intelligence Community, including the National Reconnaissance Office, was a key participant in the Hermann Panel on small satellites at the request of Director of Central Intelligence John Deutch. The report was delivered to the DCI and the Senate and House intelligence committees in June. The DCI and Acting NRO Director Keith Hall have responded to the report in classified testimony.

The DCI and the NRO fully support the concept that "smaller is better," and the NRO is moving toward a smaller class of satellites. We realize the advantages offered by these systems: increased flexibility, potential lower overall costs, improved technology and insertion, and potential for launch on-demand. The question facing the Intelligence Community and the NRO is not whether to move toward smaller satellites but, rather, how small our satellites should be. Of equal concern is how to transition from current systems to smaller ones without effecting our ability to provide uninterrupted, superior support to national policymakers and operational customers.

The Acting DNRO has initiated a study to provide the DCI and SecDef with options for the follow-on architecture. The study team includes representatives from Central Intelligence Agency, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Central Imagery Office, and Defense Airborne Reconnaissance Office who will compare cost, schedule, and performance parameters for varying system configurations against a common set of requirements. The report is due in August of this year. With this report and the Hermann small satellite report, the DCI and SecDef will be equipped to make the necessary recommendations to the President and Congress as to what the nation's satellite-reconnaissance architecture should be in the next century.