

Text of a Message Sent by the DCI to All Participants
in the CORONA Program on the Occasion of its Completion

26 May 1972

1. With the launch of the last CORONA system, an era comes to an end. As you are aware, this system is the progenitor of satellite photoreconnaissance systems. The program pioneered the development of panoramic, stereoscopic cameras for use in space and the capability to recover objects from earth orbit. Despite initial discouraging failures, persistence and dedication brought about success. Since 1960, more than one hundred missions have been flown signaling CORONA as the workhorse of photoreconnaissance systems. During this period, the system increased in mission duration from a one day, seventeen revolution orbit to current eighteen/nineteen day coverage. The resolution provided by the CORONA system improved from greater than twenty-five feet to less than seven feet. Further, its development and operation provided the basis and confidence for the development of increasingly sophisticated systems. It is interesting to recall some of the program's "firsts," among which were:

- a. First satellite reconnaissance system put into orbit.
- b. First object recovered from space.
- c. First use of panoramic and stereoscopic cameras in space flight.
- d. First dual bucket reconnaissance system.
- e. First satellite system to employ stellar index and panoramic cameras in combination.

2. The above testifies to the technical achievements made during more than a decade, and all of you may be justly proud of the part you played in these accomplishments. Although one can calculate the manhours and dollars devoted to developing and operating the system, it is not possible to

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derive in finite terms the vital impact the system has had on our national security. It is clear, however, that crucial intelligence has been collected throughout the years against targets of the highest national interest which, until very recently, could not have been collected by other means. I want to extend to all of you my deep appreciation for the part you played in the success of this truly historic intelligence collection program.

(Signed)

Richard Helms

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CORONA