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WASHINGTON, D.C.



THE NRO STAFF

September 18, 1969

Dr. McLucas has seen.

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. McLUCAS

SUBJECT: Mr. Denney's letter on Relaxations in the TALENT-KEYHOLE System

Purpose:

To inform you of a letter from Mr. George C. Denney (State/INR) to Mr. Froehlke which requests, based on Mr. Froehlke's new responsibilities, a reexamination of certain relaxations in the TALENT-KEYHOLE system.

Introduction:

This is certainly not a new issue for the intelligence community or Mr. Denney. The question of downgrading and decontrol of "the fact of" U.S. satellite reconnaissance activities was addressed in 1966, 1967 and again in 1968. We do not believe that direct action on our part is required at this time; rather, the following information describes the background on this issue and forwards a copy of Mr. Denney's letter. (-FAB D)

Background:

On April 4, 1966, Mr. Schultze (Director of the Budget) and Dr. Hornig (Science Advisor to the President) sent a letter to Secretary Rusk, asking him to investigate the national security problems raised by NASA's proposed earth-sensing program. The NSAM 156 Ad Hoc Committee was reconvened by Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, and on July 11, 1966 issued its final report. The key relevant recommendations:

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1. The NRP must continue to be protected.
2. The validity of the original (1962) satellite reconnaissance policy was reaffirmed.
3. The USIB should review the possibility of placing references to the U.S. operational satellite reconnaissance program at the SECRET or TOP SECRET security level and that satellite photography should be examined for possible release from codeword control.

On July 28, 1966 USIB assigned COMOR the task of reviewing the possibilities for downgrading and decontrol of satellite reconnaissance references and products suggested by the NSAM 156 Committee. On August 25, 1966 the USIB considered COMOR's findings. Mr. Helms stated that he was firmly in support of "maintaining our classification system as tight as possible," but approved a six-month test period after which the problem of downgrading would be reassessed (Tab A). Mr. Denney (State COMOR member and Acting USIB member) non-concurred with the COMOR recommendations.

On May 1, 1967 COMOR submitted its findings to the USIB based on the six-month test period. The USIB agreed, in principle (Tab B), to:

1. Acknowledge the fact of a U.S. satellite photographic reconnaissance program at the SECRET level.
2. Permit use of intelligence derived from exploitation of satellite photography (but not the film itself) in SECRET or TOP SECRET publications, identifying the source as "satellite photography."

On July 7, 1967 Admiral Lowrance (Acting Director, DIA) sent a memorandum to the DCI which stated that Secretary McNamara had been briefed on the downgrading and decontrol issue and felt that "the advantages are not clear at this time and that acceptance of this proposal may erode the advantages which might be gained at some future time on the surfacing of U.S. and Soviet satellite photography." On July 20, 1967 USIB circulated a memorandum stating that, "After con-

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sideration of Secretary McNamara's views the CIA member and the Chairman of USIB have non-concurred in the COMOR recommendations..." This concluded USIB's disclosure discussions in 1967.

The subject of downgrading and decontrol was dormant until September 9, 1968 when Ambassador Bohlen, Deputy Under Secretary of State, forwarded a State/ACDA paper, "Disarmament Aspects of Satellite Reconnaissance Policy," to the members of the NSAM 156 Committee for discussion at a meeting scheduled for September 16, 1968.

The paper stated, "While not essential to the conduct of the disarmament talks, it would be highly desirable to downgrade the fact that the U.S. conducts reconnaissance satellite operations from its present classification of TOP SECRET TALENT-KEYHOLE to UNCLASSIFIED."

Prior to the scheduled NSAM 156 Committee meeting the USIB met to consider the State/ACDA paper. In concluding the discussion of this issue, Mr. Helms stated that his position was "that there should be no change in the classification of reconnaissance satellite operations or the information derived from them at this time. He added that "while he was sympathetic to the disarmament effort, at the same time he felt we were responsible for the safety of U.S. intelligence interests and if we agree to any downgrading the door will be open." (Tab C)

The NSAM 156 Committee met and recommended that the Executive Committee of the Committee of Principals* be asked to approve guidelines concerning consultations with the Senate, Allies, Soviets and the public.

ACDA prepared a draft position paper, "Related Aspects of Satellite Reconnaissance Disclosure Policy," for use by the U.S. SALT delegation. The paper specifically excluded discussion of downgrading and decontrol of the fact of U.S. satellite reconnaissance activities.

*The Committee of Principals is an interagency group formed to advise the President and the NSC on policy matters relating to arms control and disarmament. Members: Secretary of State; Secretary of Defense; Director, ACDA; Chairman, JCS; Chairman, AEC; DCI; Spec Assts to the President for National Security Affairs and Science & Technology.

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Concurrent with the diminishing interest in SALT talks the concern over downgrading and decontrol of "the fact of" diminished. With the revitalization of SALT activity this spring, ACDA submitted a position paper, very similar to the September 1968 paper, to the NSSM 28 Steering Committee. The paper again specifically excludes the issue of downgrading and decontrol of "the fact of."

Present Situation:

On September 8, 1969 Mr. George Denney, Acting Director, INR (State), sent a letter to Mr. Froehlke (Mr. Helms and Admiral Showers, DIA, also received copies) stating that Mr. Froehlke "May wish to explore the question of certain relaxations in the TALENT-KEYHOLE system. . . ." (Tab D) Mr. Denney suggests that the DOD might now agree to the implementation of the USIB decision of April 27, 1967 which would:

1. Acknowledge the fact of a U.S. satellite photographic reconnaissance program at the SECRET level.
2. Permit use of intelligence derived from exploitation of satellite photography (but not the film itself) in SECRET or TOP SECRET publications, depending on the content of the intelligence, while identifying the source as "satellite photography."

You will note that Mr. Denney has not addressed the 1968 discussions on this issue. Mr. McNamara had departed the DOD by that time and it was Mr. Helms who again, as he had done previously, took a very strong position against the downgrading and decontrol of "the fact of" U.S. satellite reconnaissance.

We have been informed by Mr. Froehlke's staff that Mr. Froehlke made no commitment with regard to this issue during his discussions with Mr. Denney during a visit to State. Mr. Denney is apparently basing his request on Mr. Froehlke's new responsibilities in DOD intelligence resources management and the preliminary indication that Mr. Froehlke will review security compartmentation. It must be emphasized that it is not Mr. Froehlke but the DCI who is, under statutory provisions for the protection of intelligence sources and methods, singularly responsible for the BYEMAN and TALENT-KEYHOLE systems.

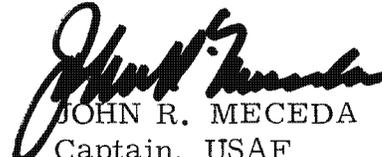
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Recommendations:

We do not believe that direct action is required on this issue at this time. We will, however, contact the staffs of Mr. Froehlke, Mr. Helms, and Admiral Showers to monitor their consideration of this issue. We will inform you of any significant activity as it may develop.


JOHN R. MECEDA
Captain, USAF

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