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~~ISI~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

10 OCT 1969

Dear Bob,

Upon recommendation and indorsement of the 303 Committee, President Nixon recently approved the continuation of the NRP as a covert program. I have attached an extract from the "Annex to the Space Task Group Report - The National Reconnaissance Program" that briefly outlines the national policy which supports the NRP and establishes the security environment in which it functions.

As the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office, I am solely and directly responsible to Mr. Laird for implementing those security policies established by the DCI for the protection of the NRP as a covert organization. These policies differ considerably from those prescribed for other DOD intelligence collectors -- the fundamental difference being the NRP and NRO are totally covert -- the NSA and DIA are not. The NRP does not exist outside the BYEMAN or TALENT-TALENT KEYHOLE security control systems. Therefore, association between NRO cover designations such as SAFUS, SAFSP, SAFSS and the intelligence community must be handled within the specially established security channels.

The policy is based upon the avoidance of a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union or third party nation as to the legality or propriety of satellite reconnaissance. One of the key elements of the policy is the requirement that no responsible official will either confirm or deny the fact that the United States is engaged in intelligence collection by satellite.

About two weeks ago you asked how material leaked to the press concerning our satellite reconnaissance activities. The majority of these articles are of a speculative nature, using historical SAMOS and MIDAS releases coupled with advances in general technology, and information contained in the U.N. Space Registry, flavored with out-of-context

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quotations. This was the case in the Aviation Week article. On certain other occasions, we have determined that new sensitive information has been leaked as a result of innocuous or careless statements confirming suspected activities. These leaks can be damaging and are regrettable because, in most cases, they could have been avoided. When such leaks occur, investigations are conducted by the OSI or CIA, as appropriate, to determine the source of the disclosure and insure that positive corrective action is taken.

I am concerned that your draft memorandum "Development of the Consolidated Defense Intelligence Program" could result in a similar type revelation, since it asserts that I am responsible for a major intelligence collection program equivalent to DIA's or NSA's. There is no unclassified explanation as to what that program might be; consequently, my covert role could be threatened by such association. This is particularly dangerous when a document is subjected to little or no control under an "Official Use Only" restriction.

While you have every right to question the efficacy or necessity of the established security policy supporting the NRP, it is imperative that you discuss all aspects of the program within the prescribed security rules until the DCI sees fit to change the rules. If you feel that this creates serious problems within your organization, I would suggest we discuss the matter with Mr. Laird.

Sincerely,

JML
John L. McLucas

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Extract

Honorable Robert F. Froehlke
Assistant Secretary (Administration)

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EXTRACT FROM "ANNEX TO THE SPACE TASK GROUP
REPORT - THE NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE PROGRAM"
JULY 15, 1969, CONFIRMED AS POLICY BY
PRESIDENT NIXON, SEPTEMBER 30, 1969

"Policies Supporting the Program

"When the first U-2 photography of the USSR was produced (in 1956), President Eisenhower directed that it be protected -- as an ultra-sensitive espionage product -- in a special security system. In 1960, when the first satellite reconnaissance photographs were produced, President Eisenhower directed that they be similarly protected and placed them in a compartment of the same special security system.

"During 1961 and early 1962, the Soviets made a number of private overtures to the U.S. protesting the use of satellites for reconnaissance. In 1962, the question of the legitimacy of satellite reconnaissance began to appear as an important pre-condition to international negotiations on disarmament and on the peaceful uses of outer space. In response to increasing pressure, the President asked a Committee of Principals, acting under the leadership of Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, to formulate a national policy which would (1) maintain United States freedom of action to conduct reconnaissance satellite operations unilaterally, (2) prevent foreign political and physical interference with those operations, (3) prevent accidental or forced disclosure of the details of the operations or end-products of the United States reconnaissance program, and, at the same time, (4) permit the United States to continue to work toward disarmament and international cooperation in space.

"A national policy supporting these goals was recommended by this Committee, approved by the President on July 10, 1962, and issued in NSC Action 2454. Essentially, the policy enjoins the United States to (1) operate its reconnaissance satellites with great discretion, (2) work toward developing tacit acceptance of these operations, and (3) avoid embarrassment to our allies or confrontation with our enemies.

"As a result of careful satellite reconnaissance policy planning, the United States is enjoying, at this time, an international political situation which provides all the advantages of tacit acceptance without the hazards inherent in open discussion or confrontation. It is critically

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important to nourish the conditions which contribute to such an atmosphere, for reconnaissance satellites require a permissive environment -- political and physical -- for successful operations. Lacking such an environment, their operation could be challenged on the floor of the United Nations or in the skies of any nation which desired to demonstrate against space espionage."

"Long Term Goals of the NRO

"The NRO plans to continue to:

1. Conduct a covert program to collect intelligence through the overflight of denied territory.
2. Seek methods to reduce the cost of such collection.
3. Improve the responsiveness of collection systems to intelligence needs.
4. Advance satellite reconnaissance techniques in order to improve collection capabilities and respond to new collection needs."

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