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



THE NRO STAFF

7 June 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Disclosure of "the fact of" Satellite Reconnaissance at the Secret Level

On 2 June, General Berg and I approached Dr. Flax regarding impending final USIB action to approve disclosure of "the fact of" satellite reconnaissance at the Secret level. Dr. Flax expressed himself as follows:

1. He agrees generally with my memorandum of 13 May, addressed to him. If anything, he thinks the situation is worse (at least potentially) than I have described it.
2. The entire intelligence community has voted for this action. In the face of that unanimity, what is Dr. Flax to do? He cannot take any courage or comfort from the fact that Mr. Helms and General Carroll were absent from the meetings. Certainly, their deputies must have sought and obtained the "party-line" on an issue of such consequence. As a matter of fact, how can he oppose the DOD position, as taken by the DIA representative?

We asked if he would be willing to talk to Mr. Helms (via KY-9) and express informal concern. He was not. I pointed out that our silence would be accepted as tacit approval and I felt strongly that some way, some how, we should register our concern, even if only for the record.

Finally, I asked if General Berg and I might take our problem - as a staff matter - to Mr. Sheldon and request his advice. Dr. Flax agreed to this saying, "You may even tell Ting how concerned I am."

Mr. Sheldon visited us on the afternoon of 2 June. He listened to our story with sympathy and delivered himself of these comments:

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1. "People say" that intelligence publications really need a capability to attribute data to satellite reconnaissance. He is not impressed.
2. "People say" that Rostow, Keeny, et al are pressing for disclosure and we must do something to propitiate them. He is not impressed.
3. Mr. Hughes group, in State, is fronting for ACDA and NASA in pressing for disclosure.
4. Everyone in CIA who knows the territory regarding satellite reconnaissance security is being discounted as "a vested interest."
5. He would wager that Mr. Helms doesn't even know the USIB is acting on this item. (Mr. Helms has been very busy recently with Viet Nam, Israel, National Student Association, etc.).
6. He recommends, at the very least, that Dr. Flax register his concern.

I asked Mr. Sheldon if he would be willing to telephone Dr. Flax and urge item 6. He said that he certainly would. He stated that he would see Adm. Taylor (DDCI), in any event, and recount our conversation and our misgivings.

Later in the afternoon, Mr. Sheldon called to tell us that, indeed, Mr. Helms was unaware of the disclosure action and that Admiral Taylor was quite willing to have Dr. Flax's comments.

On 3 June, General Berg and I again met with Dr. Flax on this matter. He was astounded at the news re the DCI. "What has happened?" "Very unusual." "Incredible!" He immediately agreed to send a "Dear Dick" memorandum to Mr. Helms. His guidance was:

1. Don't challenge the needs of the intelligence community.
2. Point out that the basic role of BYEMAN security has been to protect "the fact of."
3. Say that, if the Board action holds, we must re-rationalize the entire BYEMAN system.

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4. The CIA has the mistaken notion that one may separate satellite products from satellite operations. This is simply not so. Not like humint. Close interlock is easily observed by friend and foe.

5. We will have a serious problem with a rapidly-widening audience. Many people will feel that they have a right to ask questions.

On 5 June, I prepared a "Dear Dick" memo along the lines stated by Dr. Flax. He read it and said it was "fine, except I want to change a few things in it."

On 5 June, Mr. Tidwell (COMOR) called General Berg to say he had a note from Admiral Taylor placing a stop-order on further disclosure action pending comments from the DNRO. Mr. Tidwell was understandably upset ("I thought we had coordinated with Mr. Mazza"). General Berg assured him that there was no problem with Tidwell's paper - only with its effect on the BYEMAN system.


PAUL E. WORTHMAN
Colonel, USAF

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Dear Dick:

I have read with interest the United States Intelligence Board's recent decision to "acknowledge under a SECRET classification the fact that a satellite photographic reconnaissance program existed." It is my understanding that the Board's action was directed primarily at facilitating reference to satellite reconnaissance sources in Secret and Top Secret intelligence publications.

On the surface, this action might be evaluated as having a significant effect upon exploitation security (TALENT-KEYHOLE) and little or no effect on operational security (BYEMAN). Unfortunately, this convenient separation of effect, which serves so well in some intelligence collection operations, is very difficult, and perhaps impossible, to maintain for satellite reconnaissance.

In satellite operations the "agent" is too obvious: his origin is well-known, his arrivals and departures are general knowledge, his capabilities and capacities are widely understood and even his demise can be predicted. In the minds of friend and foe equally, satellite products are linked uniquely to specific satellite flights. As a result of this interlock, practically anything which occurs to, or within, the TALENT-KEYHOLE system impinges upon the BYEMAN system. In the case of the Board's recent action I believe that there is potentially enough such cross-effect to give us serious apprehension and to warrant the consideration of remedial policies and procedures.

Three major problem areas have occurred to me. The first has to do with the operation of the existing BYEMAN system. In spite of the ready association of the BYEMAN system with hardware, it is a fact that its major role has been to protect the fact of satellite reconnaissance. Phase I briefings are, by definition, confined to "disclosure

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that the United States Government is engaged in a highly sensitive program. " Perhaps 80% of our industrial effort is conducted under a security system where "the fact of" is the essential element of compartmentation. Phase II briefings do essentially the same thing as Phase I, except that the codeword name of a program is revealed, as well as a one-sentence statement of "the fact of." Phase III briefings - the general governmental level of access - consist of a Phase II briefing plus the option to learn details on a need-to-know basis. Very frequently this option is not invoked. Unless the application of the Board's action is carefully regulated, we will immediately find ourselves in a position where thousands of specially-investigated individuals are under BYEMAN oath regarding sensitive information which their colleagues are acquiring under the relatively relaxed standards of Secret. It appears to me that if "the fact of" is to become generally available at the Secret level, we would do well to examine the underlying rationale for the entire BYEMAN security system.

Next, I am concerned over the possibility that a wide variety of federal agencies might be offered the right to expose "the fact of" without the benefit of a firm set of ground rules for conducting such disclosures. Most agencies do not have the security tradition, experience, or background to guide them in handling such a situation expertly. I would expect NASA, for example, to experience very serious difficulties in controlling the disclosure process; the Departments of Commerce, Interior, Agriculture, among others, would have a similar problem.

Third, I believe formal guidance would be required as to who can make the disclosure. In the absence of such guidance, we can expect, as a commonplace, a situation in which one Secret-cleared person will make the disclosure to another. A standard response is predictable; the person being briefed will automatically raise more questions: Who does the reconnaissance? Where is it done? How is it done? What does it look like? Where may I see it? Properly controlling the pressure for more information will call for all the skill of a security professional. It should certainly not be left to novices.

Finally, I see the problem of a widening audience. Unless the ground rules of disclosure are drawn up very carefully, the news of official confirmation of a satellite reconnaissance program will diffuse very rapidly, bringing the existence of the program to the attention of

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literally thousands of new people. Each of these persons will feel strongly the right to know more, the right to ask questions, and the right to "contribute." These individuals, as we all know from experience, readily form groups called committees, which exert irresistible pressures to "normalize" whatever they touch. Up till now much of the vigor of the NRP has derived from its built-in protection against such normalization.

In summary, I anticipate a wide range of impact on the NRP if a license to disclose "the fact of" were issued without a very careful examination of the impact of such an action on the BYEMAN security system. Very generally, I would suggest that the TALENT-KEYHOLE and BYEMAN security systems be recognized as interlocking; that the downstream impact on the security and vitality of the NRP be taken into consideration; that the security inexperience of federal agencies outside the intelligence community be recognized; and that the phenomenon of the "widening audience" be weighed in terms of gains vs. losses.

I trust that these comments will be helpful to you. I feel strongly that we are at a critical stage and that we can take actions now which will probably avert much more formidable problems downstream.

Alexander H. Flax

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