

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON

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KEYHOLE CONTROL SYSTEMS
JOINTLY

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January 15, 1971

Dear Dick:

In the past two years I have had many occasions while studying foreign policy problems to use the excellent photographic reconnaissance data provided by satellite systems. I have also been informed of your active plans for future satellites, and recognize that the systems that you now have under development will be of tremendous assistance to those of us called upon daily to act on foreign and national security matters.

It is disturbing to learn, however, that even with the fastest possible implementation of these plans we probably must wait some five years for a satellite system that could give us, on short notice, photographic coverage of areas where activities may be in train critically affecting our international interests and plans. Our manned aircraft and our drones are a valuable asset, but their use is often severely restricted by political difficulties or hazards. I realize that the new satellite system presently planned for deployment this year will increase our coverage and to some extent our flexibility, but it cannot provide the quick responsiveness and flexibility that we require for crisis management. It also seems to me to be clear that the vulnerability to countermeasures of our present satellite systems makes somewhat questionable our complete reliance upon them in times of deep crisis.

My staff has discussed this matter with me in some detail in recent weeks, and they tell me that preliminary investigations by interagency expert groups indicate strongly that current American technology, using components now on the shelf, could provide us with an adequate twenty-four hour response system giving us good photographic detail relatively quickly and cheaply. I urge you and your colleagues to support and participate in the development of such a system, above and beyond others you are developing, because it would satisfy a very important intelligence requirement of the Department of State.

I understand that at the EXCOM meeting scheduled on January 29 you intend to discuss the Electronic Optical Imagery (EOI), near real time satellite system. It is my hope that every effort will be expended to

The Honorable
Richard Helms,
Director,
Central Intelligence Agency.

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bring this system into readiness as soon as it is feasible. I also feel strongly that you should now launch a design study of a low cost satellite system with a quick response capability which could be complementary to the more elaborate systems, and fill the gap until the near real time system is ready. This EXCOM meeting could provide a timely and appropriate occasion at which to initiate action on the simpler system which would meet State Department needs, as well as those of other agencies concerned with crisis management. We do not see these systems as competitive but, on the contrary, as complementary. As Ray Cline puts it, we need a "Model T" or "Volkswagen" to get us to the brushfire on time when our more expensive and less maneuverable Cadillacs are not able to cover that particular crisis on that particular day or week.

Because of the urgency of this matter, I am sending the Secretary of Defense a copy of this letter, in order that coordination can be expedited. Ray Cline tells me you are already aware of our interest in this subject and he will, of course, be available at any time to give you further details of our views.

Sincerely yours,


William P. Rogers

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