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~~(S)~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

30 September 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. SCHLESINGER

SUBJECT: Taking Stock of the National Reconnaissance Program

INTRODUCTION

The following is a brief report on the health of the National Reconnaissance Program. It includes an overview of the mission, management, organizational relationships, project status, key problems, and future goals of the program.

On balance, the NRO continues to meet its objectives in a highly effective manner and satisfies a significant portion of the intelligence needs of the nation. While some problems still need to be addressed, everyone associated with the program can take pride in the high level of accomplishment of the NRP's basic objectives.

MISSION OF THE NRO

The National Reconnaissance Office is chartered under a DOD-CIA Agreement dating from 1965. It consists of four program offices reporting directly to the DNRO. Two of these, the Air Force and CIA program offices, are assigned the bulk of the project work, while the third is managed by the Navy and has responsibility for a single project - **[REDACTED]**

[REDACTED] In keeping with DOD guidelines for organizational simplification and efficiency, the fourth program office previously associated with aircraft reconnaissance will be eliminated and its functions assigned to the Air Force. In conjunction with this action, the aircraft management functions within the CIA program office are also being abolished. Thus, for the first time, only satellites will be employed in the conduct of the NRO program. These actions will contribute to a significant reduction of personnel.

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We are entering a period of transition wherein satellite reconnaissance data from the National program must be made available to operational units, including the tactical field commander, without the encumbrance of compartmentized security rules. While responsibility for determining policy and security restrictions relative to the utilization of National Reconnaissance data lies with DCI and OSD, NRO must assume the responsibility for optimizing its systems to serve such needs.

MANAGEMENT

The DNRO's relationship to the ExCom is viewed as that of a corporate general manager, responsive to a board of directors. In the Director's Report, the ExCom is given a positive total program recommendation with the supplemental data required to allow complete review and approval. Within the ExCom forum, intelligence community representatives thus have the opportunity to provide parallel inputs to the ExCom principals and help shape the program.

Over the years, relations with Congress have been minimal - being confined to Committee Chairmen, some key members, and staff people. In spite of this, the Congress has remained current on NRO activities and has supported our programs very well. This year, direct contact by the DNRO and his technical and financial staff has been further restricted due to the melding of the NRP into the overall intelligence program presented to Congress by the DCI and ASD(I). While this process resulted in good support for the NRP in FY 75, extra budget pressures for FY 76 and subsequent years dictate additional effort to keep key Congressional people apprised of the program. This will be accomplished through informal contacts during relatively slack periods between budget cycles.

INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The NRO is a quasi member of the intelligence community. NRP satellites consume a large amount of national intelligence dollar resource and are the largest single collectors of intelligence information. New organizations which have been developed within the community have had an increasing tendency to exercise supervision over NRO matters. The present NRO charter is proving inadequate to define precise lines of authority. A possible

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clarification of roles may result from the National Security Council Intelligence Committee's efforts to develop an Omnibus NSCID which would better define the charters of the various intelligence organizations. In a related effort, the President has tasked his Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board to review the present NRP environment and to recommend an organizational structure for the conduct of satellite reconnaissance in the future.

The security which was originated to protect the technical quality and politically sensitive nature of the NRP has also been changing - in large measure due to the intelligence consumers' views that security has been too restrictive. The NRO plans to continue to fully respond to the needs of the intelligence organizations while working with the community to maintain a rational and protective security policy.

A great deal of interest in the NRO's future program planning exists in the operational segments of the DOD and the intelligence community. The IRAC R&D Council has proven to be an excellent multi-representational forum in which technological ideas and information relating to future reconnaissance programs can be discussed. It is apparent, however, that many diverse groups are seeking to gain the lead in steering the future technology of the NRP.

I have underway an effort aimed at developing a long term national imaging plan. I plan to take the lead in drawing together the various elements of the intelligence community which are best equipped to provide meaningful guidance for the long term technological trades in imaging systems, and to work closely with the Director of NSA to assure that our respective responsibilities in the national SIGINT program are compatible. In addition, the NRO is presently applying resources to investigate the technology required for applications of reconnaissance satellites in support of tactical commanders.

The NRO will continue its leadership in the application of advanced technology. However, I believe that an appropriately classified formal chartering document which clarifies the DNRO's authority vis-a-vis that of the intelligence community will assist in properly achieving the best mix of satellite systems for new thrusts in the tactical area as well as for national strategic needs.

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PROJECT STATUS

Near-real-time intelligence gathering is clearly taking on a major role in crisis management. In this area, the lessons learned from the [REDACTED] are proving important in the future direction of the NRP.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The NRO photographic reproduction facility at Westover AFB is in the process of phase down toward eventual closure. Current manning has been reduced by 80 people, and by 1976 we will have eliminated about 180 positions.

The [REDACTED] GINT satellites have recorded remarkable success.

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SUMMARY

I believe the NRO has served well in providing the Nation with highly useful intelligence information. Although differing from most standard forms of bureaucratic structure, the NRO's streamlined organization has enhanced its ability to more efficiently perform the intended tasks, and has provided the flexibility to assume added roles and responsibilities. However, to maintain maximum effectiveness, it is necessary to sustain the DNRO's prerogatives to carry out day-to-day management of the program within ExCom guidance. While outside support is imperative, non-productive reviews of the NRP are counter to this goal.

~~[Redacted Signature]~~
J. W. Plummer

cc: Mr. Colby, CIA
Dr. Hall, ASD(I)

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