For Your: X

Signature Approval Comments Coordination Information

Top Secret

Subject: Fact of

Letter to O. Alexis Johnson

By LWS

Your Comments/Direction:

All inside spec. Please return in Dr. Proctor's file for guidance.

Top Secret

SSO and SFO Handling Only
My view on this is that
one must the incident to make the
decision of whether the press outrage the
crew. Then we must to keep open this
option not to relieve "front of". Then the last paragraph, still conveys
the point, does not quite accurately express
my view that only the head of the decide
how the press can stock up. I'd like
this discussed at next Gen. intgr. of
the end of fy period 84. McM.
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM

Fritz,

On this "New Aces" matter—

from the EXCOM it was decided that

from the verification some would be

the best place to air the "fact of"

the present policy, but that the

V.F. would eventually get the hearing

since the principals

in the issue. Since the principals

of EXCOM are also VA principals,

it would be in line with

Burke

I feel that our visit to J. Walsh

right here been useful since no

one seems to have been on this

issue in a hurry to proceed this

up. V.C. squad item. About

April 26 or so, I think this

flying area press the need again for the

full stop.

I feel that the strategy provides

the signing of agreements in May.

Bud
MEMORANDUM FOR DR. McLUCAS

SUBJECT: Letter to Ambassador Johnson on "Fact Of"

Indications are that there is agreement between the U.S. and the Soviets to finalize a SALT ABM Treaty prior to President Nixon's visit to Moscow in May. There is also likely to be an executive agreement of some sort with respect to offensive weapons. Both will require Congressional review and approval shortly following the Moscow visit.

The Verification Panel still has not addressed a ratification strategy. The NSAM 156 Committee paper has been at a standstill since Ambassador Johnson entered the hospital.

In view of the "second thoughts" on "fact of" voiced by Mr. Helms recently and the fact that the NRO position on the table supports the release of "fact of", we feel that a letter with a restated NRO position should be sent without delay to Ambassador Johnson.

There is likely to be a very rapid effort to set a ratification strategy for SALT. We are fearful that the "fact of" issue will become lost in the desire to obtain unhampered ratification; the NRO position should be on the record.

HAROLD S. CORDE, USR.
Major, USAF
Dear Alex,

I understand that the 156 Working Group is divided in its thinking on how far to proceed in recommending revelation of "fact of" satellite reconnaissance by government spokesmen in response to public questioning about "national means of verification" for a SALT. When favorable reaction to this proposition was obtained from CIA, I instructed my representative to support the acknowledgement of "fact of," subject to certain constraints, should it become necessary.

Following recent conversations I have had with Dick Helms and others, I desire to restate my position on the "fact of" matter. I am apprehensive that many, not directly involved with the operation of the National Reconnaissance Program, tend to view the subject of "fact of" in too simplified a manner. There are two major points which should be made clear to all those deliberating this apparent dilemma. First, although one can read about "spy satellites" in the news, the largely speculative articles do not constitute official U.S. admission of the activity. Over the recent years, the official policy of protecting the "fact of" has been often viewed as fatuous in its original context. This is accurate, in a simplistic sense. However, what is ignored or not perceived is that the "fact of" policy today literally serves to constrain severely a propensity for less guarded discussion the scope and the nature of our reconnaissance activities. Thus, the original purpose of not revealing the "fact of" in order to minimize provocation or the scope of the program is indeed still effective, but in a more indirect fashion.

Second, and less subtle than the above, the admission of the "fact of" as a practical response to public questioning about "national technical means" may not serve a useful purpose in the long run. Other forms of "national technical means" might also come under scrutiny. Further, those who
would be initially skeptical or disbelieving about utility of a SALT or about our abilities to verify a SALT likely would not be satisfied with a limited statement of admission of "fact of." The alternative--going beyond a limited statement with details--seemingly would be counterproductive since, if capabilities become public knowledge, intricate countermeasures might be devised to hinder the actual monitoring of a SALT.

Thus, even for such an important concern as assuring unified support and successful ratification of a SALT, it seems impractical, in my view, to admit to "fact of" without considering the depth of implication. At this time, at least, the risks still appear too great and official silence, in the face of questioning--difficult as it is to maintain--appears to be a sound policy.

Sincerely,

John L. McLucas

The Honorable U. Alexis Johnson
Under Secretary for Political Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

cc: Mr. Helms
    Dr. David
    Dr. Tucker