

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page 2 of 5
[REDACTED]
CONTROL SYSTEM

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

[REDACTED]

THE NRO STAFF

July 12, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: USIB Meeting on Release of "Fact Of"

The USIB met on July 11 and the first item on the agenda was a review of Mr. Colby's proposal to declassify the "fact of" photo satellite reconnaissance. The following paragraphs reflect my interpretation of what occurred at the meeting.

Mr. Colby introduced the issue by saying that there have been numerous references in the press about satellite reconnaissance and in our open society it doesn't make sense to maintain a secret which everyone knows about as a secret. He said that last fall we moved out with "little feet" steps in the decompartmentation decision and that it may be time now to take another "little feet" decision for the declassification. He believes that it is not proper to continue "holding the fig leaf" any longer. Mr. Colby recognized, however, that there were counter attitudes toward his proposal. He stated that Mr. Plummer's opinion deserves the full recognition of the USIB although the NRO security study recommended a go ahead with the declassification. He completed his opening remarks by saying that he desired a discussion at the meeting and did not plan to come to a decision because he should check with Mr. Plummer and others before coming to such a decision.

Mr. Singel volunteered a clarification of the security committee's recommendation. He said that Mr. Colby may be interpreting the recommendation to release the "fact of" too broadly and stated that the committee generally believed that the political considerations might override any desire on the part of the intelligence community to release the "fact of."

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
CONTROL SYSTEM

CLASSIFIED BY [REDACTED] EXEMPT FROM
GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652 EXEMPTION CATE-
GORY S2Z DECLASSIFY ON IMP DET

~~TOP SECRET~~

CONTROL NO Internal
COPY 1 OF 5 COPIES
PAGE 1 OF 5 PAGES

~~TOP SECRET~~

Mr. Colby asked Mr. Denny of State for his position. Mr. Denny said that the Department was not in favor of the proposal and its desirability was not obvious. A release of the "fact of" might cause problems in debating the issue of earth observation and State would like to leave things the way they are. UN debates and resolutions would be made more easily for the United States if countries desire to affirm their sovereign rights and proprietary interests. (Mr. Denny had told me before the meeting that his personal position was not the position that he was directed to present at the meeting. I learned subsequently that Under Secretary of State Sisco had reversed the initial State Department position which was in favor of Mr. Colby's proposal.) Mr. Colby countered Mr. Denny's remarks by saying that the United States needs to continue being vague about its space activities and would do so even if the "fact of" were released. Mr. Singel brought up the point that, with respect to ERTS, the United States has made a commitment to release all acquired information to the public domain and would not be able to do so with reconnaissance satellite photography. Mr. Colby agreed that this was a correct statement.

Mr. Katz then read the Memorandum which Dr. Ikle has signed to Secretary Kissinger opposing the release of the "fact of." Mr. Katz stressed the fact that there was no international law about space reconnaissance and that if the Russians knew precisely how good we were it could be construed as espionage as opposed to observation. He finally stated that if such a decision to release the "fact of" is made then it should be recognized as an irreversible one.

Admiral dePoix then stated that although the proposal had two edges, he personally believed that there was a net advantage to be accrued from the release. His personal feelings are that the intelligence community should take the initiative and accomplish the release. He believes that security can be maintained and that Secretary Kissinger can make an announcement in a matter of fact way. Admiral dePoix thinks that the release of the "fact of" would permit an ability to release to the public selected satellite

~~TOP SECRET~~

CLASSIFIED BY: [REDACTED] DATE: [REDACTED]
EXEMPT FROM AUTOMATIC DOWNGRADING AND
DECLASSIFICATION

CONTROL NO. Internal
COPY _____ OF _____ COPIES
PAGE 2 OF 5 PAGES

~~TOP SECRET~~

[REDACTED]

photography which would be used to substantiate points being made by the Secretary of Defense and others about the foreign threat. He concluded his remarks by saying that we should consider joining up ERTS and reconnaissance satellites in the international forum openly in order to substantiate the United States freedom to use space.

General Allen opened his remarks by saying that the perspective away from the center of Washington seems to be different from that existing in councils such as USIB and in the Pentagon. He believes that the field, such as Los Angeles and Ft. Meade, would have a very difficult time living with a release of the "fact of" as it is proposed. He thinks that the existing policy creates a very favorable security environment and that we never have been forced to deny the existence of the reconnaissance satellite program. He questioned Mr. Colby on this point since it was stated in Mr. Colby's proposal. He said that the advantage of the present security is that it avoids unwanted discussion about the program. He said that Air Force procurement, the industrial complex and the NRO contractors are constrained by the present policy from discussing the nature of the procurement activities and that this policy works well. He believes that a move to declassify would open a one way wedge in security. He then went on to say that the definition of satellite reconnaissance is a broad one and that satellite reconnaissance has been acknowledged and is still being acknowledged very often. He cited the fact that national technical means is associated in almost everyone's mind with satellites and that satellite reconnaissance per se, in the broad definition, is acknowledged with the Meteorological Satellite Program, with DSP, and other systems. He pointed out that Mr. Colby may really be asking for an acknowledgement of [REDACTED] instead of the "fact of" itself. He asked if Mr. Colby [REDACTED] intended to continue restricting public discussion about the intelligence satellites. He stated that we must continue to maintain the present policy because we need the "blanket" it provides and that the present policy has worked well for thirteen years now. He said that we cannot be discrete between photo and SIGINT and that SIGINT must be protected because of its vulnerability to information

~~TOP SECRET~~

[REDACTED]

CONTROL NO Internal
COPY 3 OF 5 COPIES
PAGE 3 OF 5 PAGES

[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~

CO 

denial. He concluded his remarks by saying that he cannot see a major change in policy, such as this, as accruing any benefit whatsoever to the country and wondered why Mr. Colby was pursuing this approach.

Mr. Collins, the Treasury Department representative, stated that he was predisposed initially to back Mr. Colby's proposal, however, on hearing the arguments he was now supportive of General Allen's arguments.

General Giller, AEC, stated that he believed the UN context would not present a problem if the "fact of" were released and that he is concerned that the press will point to this as being a foolish secret. He believes that Dr. Teller's philosophy about openness is very important. Mr. Katz interjected that disclosures for their own sake have never done the nation a good service.

Mr. Colby then polled the Service representatives. The Army representative stated that the Army generally goes along with Admiral dePoix. The Navy representative said that security provides a convenient shield with respect to foreign representatives but the Navy also has a strong intuitive feeling favoring the release, so the Navy could be characterized as being 51 to 49 in favor. General Pustay then said that he was highly persuaded by General Allen, however, he wondered whether or not there was too much caution being exerted now and he would agree with the Navy in terms of the slight edge in favor of the release. General Allen then stated that the present policy works, and if we were to make a major change it might not work and it should be remembered that as silly as the policy appears, it is a clearly effective one.

The FBI representative said that what was really being proposed was "to take the stamps off" photo satellite reconnaissance and with a little more freedom to discuss a lot more freedom would be taken. He questioned the need for relaxing the current discipline and said that he was in high support of General Allen's argument.



~~TOP SECRET~~

GROUP 1
EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC
DOWNGRADING AND
DECLASSIFICATION

CONTROL NO Internal
COPY 4 OF 5 COPIES
PAGE 4 OF 5 PAGES

~~TOP SECRET~~

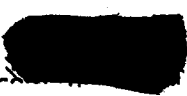


General Walters then stated that he was in support of General Giller's argument and that we must consider the need to maintain an as open a posture as possible. He would advocate the points made by both Admiral dePoix and General Giller. Mr. Singel then reiterated that the slippery slope argument was extremely valid and that we should be extremely cautious in pursuing this line without some means of containing the slippery slope.

Mr. Colby then reiterated that he had not intended to come to any conclusions at the meeting and appreciated all of the arguments--pro and con. He said that he was impressed with General Allen's arguments but that he must account for Admiral dePoix' arguments because of the basic need to accommodate the open society. He said that he was getting tired of having the CIA and the intelligence effort continually "hob goblined" about Government overthrowing and the like. He concluded by saying that he will plan to discuss this issue in the near future with Mr. Plummer and others before he decides on any further action to be taken.



Lt Colonel, USAF



~~TOP SECRET~~

1. APPROVED FOR RELEASE BY NSA ON 05-08-2011
2. APPROVED FOR RELEASE BY NSA ON 05-08-2011
3. APPROVED FOR RELEASE BY NSA ON 05-08-2011

CONTROL NO Internal
COPY OF COPIES
PAGE 5 OF 5 PAGES

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Versions of "Fact of" M/R

The last page of this M/R was retyped because of a misunderstanding. The retyped version (TAB A) went to Mr. Plummer as an attachment to the Significant Items paper. [REDACTED] wants the M/R to remain as it was originally prepared.

[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~

CONTROL SYSTEM

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

THE NRO STAFF

July 12, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: USIB Meeting on Release of "Fact Of"

The USIB met on July 11 and the first item on the agenda was a review of Mr. Colby's proposal to declassify the "fact of" photo satellite reconnaissance. The following paragraphs reflect my interpretation of what occurred at the meeting.

Mr. Colby introduced the issue by saying that there have been numerous references in the press about satellite reconnaissance and in our open society it doesn't make sense to maintain a secret which everyone knows about as a secret. He said that last fall we moved out with "little feet" steps in the decompartmentation decision and that it may be time now to take another "little feet" decision for the declassification. He believes that it is not proper to continue "holding the fig leaf" any longer. Mr. Colby recognized, however, that there were counter attitudes toward his proposal. He stated that Mr. Plummer's opinion deserves the full recognition of the USIB although the NRO security study recommended a go ahead with the declassification. He completed his opening remarks by saying that he desired a discussion at the meeting and did not plan to come to a decision because he should check with Mr. Plummer and others before coming to such a decision.

*He what?
jck*

Mr. Singel volunteered a clarification of the security committee's recommendation. He said that Mr. Colby may be interpreting the recommendation to release the "fact of" too broadly and stated that the committee generally believed that the political considerations might override any desire on the part of the intelligence community to release the "fact of."

** I spoke to Mr. Colby the morning before the meeting and he indicated that regardless of what happened at the meeting, he was planning to hold off a decision to get the*

~~TOP SECRET~~
CONTROL SYSTEM

CLASSIFIED BY [redacted] EXEMPT FROM
GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652 EXEMPTION CAT.
GORY 982 DECLASSIFY ON MAP DET.

~~TOP SECRET~~

CONTROL NO Internal
COPY 1 OF 5 COPIES
PAGE 1 OF 5 PAGES

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

General Walters then stated that he was in support of General Giller's argument and that we must consider the need to maintain an as open a posture as possible. He would advocate the points made by both Admiral dePoix and General Giller. Mr. Singel then reiterated that the slippery slope argument was extremely valid and that we should be extremely cautious in pursuing this line without some means of containing the slippery slope.

After hearing the various views,
A Mr. Colby ~~then reiterated~~ that he had not intended to come to any conclusions at the meeting and appreciated all of the arguments--pro and con. He ~~was~~ ^{is} impressed with General Allen's arguments, but ~~that~~ ^{is} he must account for Admiral dePoix's arguments because of the basic need to accommodate the open society. ~~He said that he was getting tired of having the CIA and the intelligence effort continually "hobgobblined" about Government overthrowing and the like.~~ He ~~concluded by saying that he will~~ plan to discuss this issue in the near future with Mr. Plummer and others before he decides on any further action to be taken.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Lt Colonel, USAF

TAB H

~~TOP SECRET~~

CLASSIFIED BY [redacted] FROM [redacted]
GENERAL SECURITY [redacted] OF [redacted]
EXECUTIVE SECRET [redacted] OF [redacted]
COPY [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

CONTROL NO Internal
COPY OF COPIES
PAGE 5 OF 5 PAGES

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CONFIDENTIAL