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FUTURE USE OF HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTO SATELLITES

The current high level interest in reaching an agreement with the Soviets on offensive and defensive missiles points up the necessity for continued improvements in U. S. intelligence collection programs to provide the best possible safeguard capability during future U. S. / USSR discussions.

The recent crisis in Czechoslovakia illustrates a problem which the U. S. faces now and will continue to face on a world-wide basis. In this case the Soviets deployed between 11-18 divisions so they could be deployed quickly if the discussions they were having in Czechoslovakia deteriorated to a point where force would be needed. Two of the divisions were deployed inside Czechoslovakia and the first indication we had of the magnitude of this deployment was from an attaché report based on visual sightings of major components of one of the divisions.

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Large numbers of troops, rapidly deployed, are difficult to conceal from overhead photography. High resolution satellite photography could be tasked to provide important confirmation of these kinds of activity in the future. [REDACTED] the Soviets could alert the U. S. to geographical areas where high resolution photography could be used to improve our knowledge of any USSR military activity.

Satellite collection platforms are one of the few acceptable methods for collecting SIGINT and photographic intelligence data covertly so that minimum international disapproval is anticipated if failures occur in the satellite collection systems.

ASSESSMENT OF THE CONFRONTATION RISK

Although it is widely suspected by the world at large that the U. S. and USSR use satellites to collect intelligence information, neither country has pressured the other for a confrontation on this issue.

The use of satellites in this manner is an expensive and technologically difficult feat. Both for economic reasons as well as the technical

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difficulty, it is probable that the USSR and U. S. will continue to be the only nations to use overflight by satellites for intelligence collection. Some serious breach of international relations could cause the issue to be raised publicly to the mutual detriment of the U. S. and USSR programs.

As a result of the international repercussions which followed the U-2 incident in 1960, the NRO was established to provide an organization capable of covertly collecting photographic and electronic intercept data for the national intelligence programs. Before an overflight of denied territory can be made, Presidential approval by the 303 Committee must be obtained.

Since the NRO was established there has been no significant confrontation of any overflights over denied territory. However, the recent Pueblo incident serves to illustrate that if a foreign nation is repeatedly subjected to an awareness that a U. S. collection system is operating near its borders, there is a reasonable probability that such a nation will be forced to take such steps as it deems necessary to prevent the intelligence collection system from operating properly.

It seems reasonable to assume that photographs obtained from earth resources satellites are certain to be construed by many nations to be a part of the U. S. intelligence collection programs regardless of our attempts to show that such exploitation is done to present earth resources data to all the nations of the world for the general benefit of mankind. It would be folly to start such a collection program until absolute evidence can be presented on the benefits of such a program, first, to the U. S. citizen as a means of improving his day-to-day existence and, secondly, to the international communities, how such data could be exploited for their own national interest.

The risk of international confrontation would seem abnormally high at this time while the U. S. is standing virtually alone against Communist forces in Vietnam and Korea. An earth resources program is almost certain to be interpreted more as a "spy in the sky" than a help to humanity.

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