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NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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June 15, 1966

The Honorable
U. Alexis Johnson
Room 7207
The State Department
Washington, D. C.

Dear Alex:

May I clarify certain portions of the last minutes of the NSAM 156 Ad Hoc Committee (May 25, 1966) wherein reference is made to the National Reconnaissance Office report which was discussed at the meeting and to my views.

In connection with the first sentence of paragraph 3 of the minute, let me call attention to the NRO report. It poses for consideration certain aspects of the risks and costs involved in any assessment or judgment on political sensitivity but does not, in fact, make a judgment of the technical threshold at which political sensitivity begins. This I also emphasized in my remarks at the meeting. Specifically, the report at the end of paragraph 3a, page 7, states that

For the broad spectrum of military intelligence targets, the threshold appears to be at a value of resolution between twenty and thirty meters. It is not clear whether this threshold for military target information relates closely to a threshold for political sensitivity.

My next concern relates to the last sentence of paragraph 3 on page 2 which reads in part:

Dr. Flax said that if the question were posed in terms of releasability of products, without declassifying equipment, the general technical threshold could probably be placed at about 5 to 10 feet resolution, rather than the 10 meters earlier cited.

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This may leave the impression that I proposed the release of the products of KH-4 which was not the case. The question posed was at what level of resolution would photography, if released, permit inferences as to the state of the art which the NRO considers would not significantly aid the opposition. I offered, tentatively, that this might be at a resolution of five to ten feet--an opinion which I indicated I would want to confirm with careful study. In fact, at the meeting you requested that the NRO make such a study of technical security considerations, which we have under way and hope to transmit to you shortly.

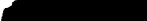
I would appreciate it if you would make this clarification available to the other members of the Committee.

Sincerely,


Alexander H. Flax

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