MEMORANDUM FOR MR. PACKARD

SUBJECT: General Bennett's Proposal on Decontrol and Downgrading of Satellite Photography

You have asked for my comments on the subject proposal.

While I recognize the need to derive a maximum utilization of the products of satellite photography, I am concerned, at this particular time that the advantages to be gained in the acknowledgement of the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance at the SECRET level are at the very best extremely minimal.

We are presently engaged in, what we hope to be, substantive negotiations of a SALT. We have entered these negotiations with the objective of maintaining the present tacit acceptance by the Soviets of our satellite reconnaissance activities. The Soviets have overtly described to us their nervousness and concern about any action on either their or our part which might jeopardize this present tacit acceptance.

Our position in these negotiations is based essentially on the guidance that, except for those limitations clearly requiring verification through on-site inspection, we would rely to the maximum extent necessary on verification by "national means." Our delegation has been instructed, generally, to offer no further definition or description of what these means include.

A disclosure of the "fact of" U.S. satellite reconnaissance at the SECRET level, outside a compartmented control system could have seriously damaging effects on the conduct of these negotiations or could render any resulting agreement completely unacceptable.
I believe it prudent to at least delay the discussion of General Bennett's proposal until we can see more clearly the progress of the SALT talks and any advantages which might be gained in the surfacing of the "fact of" our activities.

John L. McLucas