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CONTROL SYSTEM

~~ISI~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

~~TOP SECRET~~

February 7, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Release of Satellite Photography

This memorandum is the NRO response to the February 3, 1973 memorandum to you from the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. The question of whether or not to officially admit to the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance has been considered very often in the interagency forum since the national policy was established in 1962. Following each review it has been decided that the release of the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance would not accrue any long run benefit to either the Government or the public and that an official public disclosure would serve to, in the long run, draw out most of the facts about the precise nature of the satellite reconnaissance effort. The most recent decision to retain the present policy was made last June by Dr. Kissinger after considerable debate about the level of public disclosure required for SALT ratification. The SALT agreements were able to be ratified by the Congress without open discussion of the systems to be used for "national means of verification." A demand by the public or the media for proof of our verification adequacy never materialized.

As you are aware, the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance is protected within the TALENT-KEYHOLE Control System. The Director of Central Intelligence is responsible for maintenance of this compartmented system. In order to publicly acknowledge the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance and release the product, the DCI must obtain the concurrence of the President. The Secretary of Defense does not have the unilateral authority to adopt Mr. Friedheim's recommendation.

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I recommend that prior to making your position final on this matter you should discuss the issue directly with the DCI. The DCI, under the present NRO arrangement, provides the security policy for the conduct of the National Reconnaissance Program. If you desire to pursue Mr. Friedheim's recommendation further, I will be happy to brief you on the pro and con arguments which have been presented over time.



John L. McLucas

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS

~~TOP SECRET~~  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

February 3, 1973

Noted By: [unclear]  
Vice Ch: [unclear]

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Release of Special Photography

1. Appropriate Air Force authorities have been the focal point for consideration of this topic in each of several recent years. Their files probably contain many of the pros and cons, particularly in technical areas, and you may wish to draw upon those. On several occasions we provided them input on PA aspects.
2. I support release of photography, providing appropriate selection safeguards are established to prevent any inadvertant damage to national security or personnel safety. There is nothing so credible to the public as a picture of how things really look. The best historic example of this was the success of the McNamara photography display which proved to the public and our allies that there were Soviet missiles in Cuba.
3. There are several traditionally-raised objections to release of special photography.
  - a. It compromises technology, schedules and overall capabilities.
  - b. It would encourage neutralization and camouflage.
  - c. Rather than "open skies" third nations including some friends and allies would regard it as "spying."
  - d. It would provide an illusion that we know everything and need no other collection methods or on-site inspections.
  - e. It would complicate diplomacy.
  - f. It is the President's ace-in-the-hole and should be saved for only the direst sort of emergency.
4. There are other, and I believe much stronger, reasons why this photography should be used selectively during SecDef open Congressional testimony this spring:

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a. Scores of Congressmen and allied officials have seen it.  
 b. "The fact of" is the worst kept secret we have. It is widely known and regularly written about.  
 c. There are ways to protect specific technical and schedule capabilities.

d. Neutralization capabilities are being pursued as is camouflage.

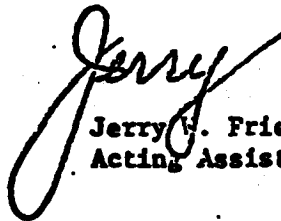
e. As the new SecDef you are moving from a beyond-Vietnam period when government credibility was seriously questioned into a time when you need a dramatic new way to show that we know what we are talking about.

f. The precise statistics we produce every year in the Defense Report and in testimony, the precision with which we talked at SALT-time about Soviet missiles/submarines; and the fact that we can produce such "artist's concepts" as the attached on the building Soviet carrier all demonstrate how good our "national means of verification" are.

g. Most importantly, if we are to provide the American people with the facts they need to support the defense budget and capabilities necessary to maintain Nixon Doctrine detente for a generation of peace, then we must make visible the now-invisible Soviet threat and the momentum of Chinese weapons growth.

h. If this is, indeed, an era of non-confrontation, then no nation need fear us and no nation need be upset if we take those steps which are essential to make our informed-citizensry-democracy work. If others have no need to do that under their own governmental systems, then they can have our understanding of their situation with the expectation on our part that they understand our situation. It's co-existence understood and tolerated by all sides.

5. My recommendation is that rather than making this release a dramatic Presidential and emergency event, the SecDef simply include in his unclassified Defense Report and testimony some of the photos we have shown in recent years at NATO. That would cross the bridge, enhance credibility, make the demands of detente visible, and meet our ultimate responsibilities to the American public while still safeguarding national security.



Jerry V. Friedheim  
 Acting Assistant Secretary

Attachment

