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(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

27 June 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. ~~PLAX~~

SUBJECT: Rostow Disclosure Initiative

Background:

On June 17, we furnished you a copy of a draft DOD response to the Rostow disclosure initiative, as prepared by JCS, DIA, and the NRO Staff.

Present Status:

On Tuesday, June 21, Mr. Vance reviewed the draft DOD response, and approved a memorandum to Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson (see Tab A). As he prepared to sign it (a final typing was required), he received a memorandum prepared by Mr. Barber and signed by Mr. Yarmolinsky (see Tab B). After reading this paper, he changed his outgoing memorandum to what you see in Tab C and returned Tab A with the note you see in the upper right-hand corner.

~~PAUL E. WORTSMAN~~
Colonel, USAF

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4. (TSTK) From an intelligence viewpoint, satellite reconnaissance provides the intelligence community with annual usable coverage of [REDACTED]. It also provides usable coverage of [REDACTED] surface for intelligence, mapping, charting, and target materials purposes. The knowledge of communist capabilities in the strategic offensive, defensive, and nuclear energy fields is largely obtained or confirmed by satellite reconnaissance and could not be acquired by any other means except possibly on-site inspections or manned aircraft overflights. Thus, satellite reconnaissance represents a productive and irreplaceable source to assess more definitively the military threat against the United States and to determine the nature, character, and strengths of the US national force structure and the defense posture to counter these capabilities. These assessments have a direct bearing on national defense budgetary considerations.

5. (TS¹⁰⁰²) Appendices A and B hereto set forth in greater detail the effect of the proposal upon NRP technology and intelligence collection capability.

6. (TS¹⁰⁰²) The Soviets could initiate an effective program to reduce detection or observation that would result in a serious reduction in US intelligence collection assessment capabilities. While increased high-resolution stereo coverage could reduce the effectiveness of such a program, such US reaction would take time, vastly increase collection costs, and increase photo interpretation/exploitation requirements and costs.

7. (TSTK) Discontinuance of both US and Soviet satellite reconnaissance activities, due to political action, would result in the United States sustaining a more serious loss than the USSR. Under such circumstances, the Soviets could continue reasonably effective conventional intelligence collection in the "open" US society; whereas the US conventional intelligence collection in the "closed" Soviet society would remain largely ineffective and nonproductive of intelligence needed to replace that formerly derived from satellite reconnaissance.

8. (TSTK) Disclosure of the US satellite reconnaissance program could also result in an overestimation of this capability by friendly nations which now authorize US-manned reconnaissance activities from their territory. Such overestimation could cause the withdrawal of these

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privileges, thereby denying the United States the capability to conduct more conventional operations employing manned aircraft, which are more flexible, timely, and less costly than satellites, in responding to and satisfying national and military intelligence requirements.

9. In summary, the Department of Defense believes that the NRP is a productive and irreplaceable intelligence collection asset. Disclosure of this capability would result in the loss or degradation of this source of information with the attendant effect on the national defense posture. Any disclosure initiative should carefully consider the serious loss to this nation's intelligence collection effort and technological advantage in the satellite reconnaissance field.

10. (U) We believe that the proposal should not be approved.

Attachments

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