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CONTROL SYSTEM

(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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THE NRO STAFF

2 August 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF, SPECIAL SECURITY CENTER, CIA

SUBJECT: Security Classification Policy

The NRO Staff has reviewed your June 30, 1976 memorandum (5369-76) on classification of the terms "NRO" and "NRP." It is reasonable that both terms be protected at the same level. The requirement that "NRO" or "NRP", whether spelled out or in initials, be protected within either [redacted] or TALENT-KEYHOLE channels has been effective in reducing knowledge about the NRP to those directly associated with it. This policy is clearly understood and manageable and it serves the best interest of the NRP. We recommend its continuation. Changes to this policy should be based only upon evidence that its effect is deleterious to U.S. intelligence programs. We have not seen such evidence.

The only apparent utility in the proposed policy change would be to facilitate references to "NRO" or "NRP" in the context of personalities or organizational identities. Allowing non-compartmented usage of the initials would focus abnormal attention on them. It could lead to transgressions (as readers made marginal or oral notes in order to flesh out what "NRO" or "NRP" meant), thereby precipitating an erosion of the security protection. This would provide an undesirable level of visibility into NRP management.

The NRO Staff, therefore, concludes that the initials "NRO" and "NRP" and the titles "National Reconnaissance Program" and "National Reconnaissance Office" should be classified SECRET/[redacted] or TALENT-KEYHOLE.

In a broader context, our most vital concern is the protection provided by the [redacted] Control System to the NRO with respect to methods, techniques, technology, production, funding, and system capabilities. This is an issue separate and distinct from product classification. As the dialogue continues over product decompartmentation, we should exclude from the universe of discussion the [redacted] system and the identities of the NRO and NRP.

[redacted signature block]

Brigadier General, USAF  
Director

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(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

21 July 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR GEN SHIELDS

SUBJECT: Classification of NRO and NRP

The suggested memorandum to the Director of the CIA's Special Security Center is in response to his letter to you (Attachment 1). As we do not find the justifications in paragraph two convincing, the memo concurs with his desire to reclassify the initials NRO and NRP, but it does not accept the planned decompartmentation. It also urges that he continue to provide strong protection to the [REDACTED] System. Recommend that you sign the suggested memorandum.

[REDACTED]  
Captain, USAF

1 Attachment  
Mr. Leidenheimer's ltr  
dtd 30 June 1976

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