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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

16 JUN 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BUSH

SUBJECT: Declassification of Satellite Reconnaissance

One of the continuing debates in the Intelligence Community has been the security classification applied to satellite reconnaissance activities and the products derived from the program. This debate has intensified in recent months and it is understandably a complex issue.

Two recent efforts, both aimed at presenting the classification issue to the President for a statement of policy in the near future, are arriving at essentially opposite recommendations. The Standing Committee on Space Policy of the National Security Council's Under Secretaries Committee, has agreed to a recommendation for the President which will maintain the "fact of" as classified. In contrast, Dr. Proctor's ad hoc paper recommends, in part, the declassification of the fact that the U.S. conducts photographic and signals intelligence collection by satellite.

I strongly support the widest use of the product of satellite reconnaissance, and I believe great strides have been made in the last three years, recognizing that much more is still needed. Opening the door for free discussion of the satellite program, however, prior to exhausting all other avenues to make the product more useful, even though classified, may not be the best solution in the long run.

I believe that we should sustain the Standing Committee on Space Policy recommendation for the time being.

Robert Ellsworth

cc: Mr. Sisco, State Dept
[redacted] CIA
Chm, Security Committee,
NFIB

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