

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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September 21, 1978

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI
SUBJECT: Public Acknowledgement of the "Fact of"
Photoreconnaissance Satellites

The issue whether to declassify the fact that the U.S. conducts satellite photoreconnaissance is ready for your decision. All agencies recognize the inevitability of declassification. The remaining questions are when, and what follows.

The Policy Review Committee has now completed its deliberations of this subject based on a thorough going interagency review of the issues.

The PRC reached a consensus that there could be a simple declarative declassification of the fact that the U.S. conducts satellite photoreconnaissance including acknowledgement that photoreconnaissance is one of the national technical means used by the U.S. for verification of compliance with SALT and other arms control agreements.

There were differences of view on the possible extension of this declassification to selectively declassify and release imagery or information derived from overhead reconnaissance to further economic, foreign policy, defense, and political objectives of the U.S. This will be studied in depth by the PRC. We will come to you in the near future with final recommendations on the next step of selective declassification of products.

It is common "unofficial" knowledge that the U.S. and the USSR use satellite reconnaissance techniques and that previous Presidents as well as a former DCI have discussed publicly that the U.S. uses satellites for arms control verification.

State and ACDA have both strongly endorsed the need to declassify the "fact of" promptly to help us attain public support for SALT II.

OSD and JCS are willing to accept declassification but remain concerned about the possibility of declassifying the actual product.

I agree

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Declassified/Released on 4/14/00
under provisions of E.O. 12958
by R. Soubers, National Security Council

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CIA feels that the Kampiles case could result in the courts forcing acknowledgement of the "fact of" if a successful prosecution and resultant conviction is to be obtained. Stan believes that we should allow the courts to "drag the fact of out of us" so we can say we are not responsible for giving away secrets -- the courts are.

We fully agree with CIA -- as does the Justice Department -- that successful prosecution of the Kampiles case will result in the courts making a decision to declassify at least the "fact of", and probably more. Cy, Paul and I believe we will be on much more positive political ground if we take the initiative to acknowledge the "fact of." You have an ideal opportunity to do so in your remarks at Cape Kennedy October 1. *ok*

There are a number of implementing steps required in connection with the announcement (advance consultations with allies and Soviets, modification of security rules, etc.). I will direct that these proceed if you approve the PRC recommendation. Our target date will be your October 1 speech.

RECOMMENDATION

That you approve the PRC recommendation for the formal public acknowledgement and declassification of the "fact of" photo-reconnaissance from space.

Approve Disapprove Other

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