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26 September 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: TSO's and BSO's

FROM: Theodore M. Anderson

Acting Chief, Special Security Center

SUBJECT: Presidential Policy Decision

1. The President has decided to declassify the "Fact Of" using photographic reconnaissance satellites as the basic means of ensuring that the United States can successfully monitor Soviet arms development in keeping with SALT agreements. The means by which the President will place this information into the public domain may well be in a speech at Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral, Florida, on 1 October 1978. However, this date is indefinite and until such time as he makes his statement, all personnel are to consider the "Fact Of" still classified.

2. This step of declassifying the "Fact Of", which has been classified collateral Secret for the past 4½ years, is an official confirmation of what is already generally known by the informed public and has been referred to rather freely during the past few years by the American and foreign press. It is a decision that was arrived at only after lengthy study and painstaking review which has been over two years in the making.

3. In taking this step, the U. S. Government realizes that this may engender considerable public interest in the field of overhead reconnaissance, its capabilities, targets, forms and methods, and its overall effectiveness. The declassification action, however, will extend only as far as a statement admitting to the "Fact Of" an overhead photo reconnaissance capability, but will not include details about that program, imagery, or imagery derived products collected by that program, nor the "Fact Of" any SIGINT satellite capability.

[Redacted] 1.5.(c)
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Partially Declassified/Released on 7/14/00
under provisions of E.O. 12958
by R. Soubers, National Security Council
F-88-1450

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TALLEN
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SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 12958
EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN OTHERWISE (GPO or 48)
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON
DATE 12/31/99

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4. All TSO's and BSO's are requested to ensure that cleared [redacted] and TALENT-KEYHOLE personnel under their jurisdiction are appropriately briefed of the impending announcement and that they understand that the following points pertain to this major policy change:

a. The only information being declassified is the "Fact Of" overhead photographic reconnaissance by the U. S. Government.

b. No declassification will be made regarding the facts about U. S. Government SIGINT satellite surveillance which will continue to be controlled within [redacted] or 1.5(c) TALENT-KEYHOLE channels at the Top Secret level. The "Fact Of" SIGINT satellites also remains classified.

c. No "Facts About" photographic reconnaissance collection, actual imagery or imagery derived information will be declassified by this action. Therefore, cleared personnel will continue to be bound by their secrecy agreements and are not to discuss either their knowledge of or participation in overhead reconnaissance programs. No one is to acknowledge that they have ever had access to any information about overhead reconnaissance or its product.

5. The NRO is to alert its contractors through NRO program offices.

6. We envision no change in the classification of "Facts About" photo satellite programs by virtue of this planned disclosure. The only means by which we will be able to maintain continued security discipline and protection of our valuable collection programs and their unique products is through the continued diligence and cooperation of the current and former cleared community.

7. There may be a prudent need to brief formerly cleared high level government and industry personnel who may find themselves the object of press attention. TSO/BSO's are requested on a priority basis, to advise the SSC/CIA of any such candidate personnel to determine whatever briefing is plausible and desirable.

8. All inquiries on this matter will be handled at the Washington level. More specific advice on where inquiries should be addressed will follow.

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9. We realize the timing on this notification for this policy change is very short. However, it is most imperative that TSO/BSO's take action on this message to ensure that their cleared personnel are briefed prior to the President's speech rather than afterwards to prevent erroneous conclusions being drawn that our photographic systems are being declassified and that discussions regarding these systems can now take place outside the classified compartmented arena.

10. Please ensure that candidates for debriefing are also made aware of points in paragraph 4.


Theodore M. Anderson

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