

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

CONFIDENTIAL--XGDS (2)

September 28, 1978

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI

FROM: ROBERT A. ROSENBERG *Rosenberg*

SUBJECT: Guidance on Public Queries Related to  
Declassification of the "Fact of"  
Photoreconnaissance Satellites

*Done by  
phone with  
Rosenberg  
11/17/78  
JL*

The attached press guidance and Q's and A's (TAB A) have been approved by Frank Press as the Chairman, PRC (Space) and reflect our best considered effort to accommodate to the security concerns of OSD, JCS and CIA versus the desire to be (possibly more than) forthcoming by State, ACDA, and NASA. This was done jointly by the NSC and OSTP following ACDA's submission of a draft interagency effort.

I have sent copies of the guidance and Q's and A's to both OSD and DCI staff contacts for information (advising that I only want to hear back if their principals personally have major objections--as informally they have agreed to the approach taken).

The guidance is broadly encompassing--and contains all the essential restrictions to stay within the President's guidance. Initially we believe all public queries should be referred to only one spokesman for the government, to avoid confusion and conflicting stories (if any). Schecter and Powell have reached agreement with "the community" that will be OSD/PA.

I have assured that the guidance and Q's and A's are consistent with the draft of Stan Turner's security plan (which will be on the streets by 1 October--his people report).

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the directive at TAB I issuing Administration policy at this time.

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

Jerry Schecter concurs.

*F88-1450*

CLASSIFIED BY Zbigniew Brzezinski  
EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION  
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652  
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5B(2)  
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON 2 Oct 78

~~CONFIDENTIAL - KGD (2)~~  
**UNCLASSIFIED**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. How good is the quality of the pictures our satellites take?

A. Very good. I cannot go into specific detail regarding the capabilities of these systems.

Q. How often do we photograph a given area?

A. Photoreconnaissance coverage is contingent on national security requirements and requirements to verify compliance with arms control agreements. I cannot discuss the specific operational characteristics of our photoreconnaissance systems.

Q. What do we photograph from satellites?

A. We use photoreconnaissance satellites to monitor certain activities that are relevant to compliance with arms control agreements and other national security requirements.

Q. Do we take satellite photographs of other countries besides the Soviet Union?

A. We use photoreconnaissance satellites to monitor certain activities that are relevant to compliance with arms control agreements and other national security requirements.

Q. Do we ever photograph the U.S. from space?

A. Yes. Periodically, we <sup>operate</sup> test these systems over the U.S. ~~to validate their effectiveness~~ in a manner that preserves and respects established concepts of privacy and civil liberties.

Q. Who operates the satellites we use to verify arms control agreements?

A. Those satellites are operated by the <sup>Department of Defense</sup> ~~government~~ at the direction of the President and the National Security Council. I cannot comment on details of operational control.

~~CONFIDENTIAL - KGD (2)~~  
**UNCLASSIFIED**

CLASSIFIED BY Zbigniew Brzezinski  
EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION  
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652  
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5B(2)  
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON 2 Oct 78

Q. Who sees the results?

A. The results of satellite photoreconnaissance are available to appropriate analysts and policymakers in the Executive and Legislative Branches.

Q. Have we ever shown photographs taken by these satellites to the Soviets?

A. No.

Q. Do we show these satellite photographs to our Allies?

A. We share ~~selected~~ information with our Allies under appropriate safeguards in order to increase our mutual confidence that other countries are complying with arms control agreements.

Q. Does the Soviet Union also use satellite photography?

A. Yes.

Q. How can we be sure that the Soviets won't destroy our satellites?

A. The SALT ONE agreements and the draft SALT TWO treaty specifically prohibit Soviet interference with U.S. national technical means of verification which include photoreconnaissance satellites. In addition, we are currently engaged in discussions with the Soviets aimed at limiting anti-satellite capabilities. The White House statement on space policy issued last June reaffirms that an attack on a U.S. satellite would clearly be a hostile act.

Q. Is it legal to take pictures from outer space?

A. Yes, the use of photoreconnaissance satellites is consistent with the Outer Space Treaty of 1977 and is not precluded by any principle of international law. The SALT ONE agreements specifically provide that national technical means will be used for verification of compliance with the agreements. The draft SALT TWO agreement nearing completion also refers to the use of such means of verification.

~~CONFIDENTIAL--XGDS (2)~~  
**UNCLASSIFIED**

**UNCLASSIFIED**  
CONFIDENTIAL (S) (2)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q. How good is the quality of the pictures our satellites take?
- A. Very good. I cannot go into specific detail regarding the capabilities of these systems.
- Q. How often do we photograph a given area?
- A. Photoreconnaissance coverage is contingent on national security requirements and requirements to verify compliance with arms control agreements. I cannot discuss the specific operational characteristics of our photoreconnaissance systems.
- Q. What do we photograph from satellites?
- A. We use photoreconnaissance satellites to monitor certain activities that are relevant to compliance with arms control agreements and other national security requirements.
- Q. Do we take satellite photographs of other countries besides the Soviet Union?
- A. We use photoreconnaissance satellites to monitor certain activities that are relevant to compliance with arms control agreements and other national security requirements.
- Q. Do we ever photograph the U.S. from space?
- A. Yes. Periodically, we operate these systems over the U.S. in a manner that preserves and respects established concepts of privacy and civil liberties.
- Q. Who operates the satellites we use to verify arms control agreements?
- A. Those satellites are operated by the Department of Defense at the direction of the President and the National Security Council. I cannot comment on details of operational control.

**UNCLASSIFIED**  
CONFIDENTIAL (S) (2)

CLASSIFIED BY Zbigniew Brzezinski  
EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION  
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652  
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5B(2)  
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON 2 Oct 78  
under provisions of E.O. 12958  
by R. Soubers, National Security Council

4-14-00  
#88-145U

25

~~CONFIDENTIAL EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN OTHERWISE~~  
**UNCLASSIFIED**

- Q. Who sees the results?
- A. The results of satellite photoreconnaissance are available to appropriate analysts and policymakers in the Executive and Legislative Branches.
- Q. Have we ever shown photographs taken by these satellites to the Soviets?
- A. No.
- Q. Do we show these satellite photographs to our Allies?
- A. We share information with our Allies.
- Q. Does the Soviet Union also use satellite photography?
- A. Yes.
- Q. How can we be sure that the Soviets won't destroy our satellites?
- A. The SALT ONE agreements and the draft SALT TWO treaty specifically prohibit Soviet interference with U.S. national technical means of verification which include photoreconnaissance satellites. In addition, we are currently engaged in discussions with the Soviets aimed at limiting anti-satellite capabilities. The White House statement on space policy issued last June reaffirms that an attack on a U.S. satellite would clearly be a hostile act.
- Q. Is it legal to take pictures from outer space?
- A. Yes, the use of photoreconnaissance satellites is consistent with the Outer Space Treaty of 1977 and is not precluded by any principle of international law. The SALT ONE agreements specifically provide that national technical means will be used for verification of compliance with the agreements. The draft SALT TWO agreement nearing completion also refers to the use of such means of verification.

~~CONFIDENTIAL EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN OTHERWISE~~  
**UNCLASSIFIED**

Q. Do we use photographic satellites to spy on other countries?

A. Photoreconnaissance satellites help us to verify compliance with the terms of arms control agreements.

Q. Does the phrase "national technical means" refer to other devices besides photoreconnaissance satellites?

A. Yes. Verification of different arms control agreements necessarily involves various types of technology. For instance, a seismic detection system would be the principal means of verifying compliance with agreements that limit underground nuclear testing.

Q. Is the use of photographic satellites to verify SALT agreements something new? If you were reluctant to talk about those satellites before, why are you doing so now?

A. The President's explicit reference is the result of a number of considerations. First, it is related to a reassessment of our security classification procedures, in order to make as much information available as possible without jeopardizing national security. Second, it is part of a general review of our national space program. By referring to our use of photoreconnaissance satellites, we want to make clear to the public that verification of SALT agreements is based on our own technical capabilities and does not depend on Soviet good faith or assurances.

Q. I understand that the President decided last spring that the fact that the U.S. conducts satellite photoreconnaissance should remain classified. Is that true? If so, why did the President change his mind?

A. Many aspects of our space policy have been under continuing review since the White House announcement of this policy made last June. As I said before, one factor that led to the President's statement was our desire to promote public understanding of our ability to verify a new SALT agreement and arms control agreements generally.

Q. How is the President's statement related to the Kampiles incident?

~~CONFIDENTIAL - XGPR (2)~~  
**UNCLASSIFIED**

- A. The Kampiles case is presently in litigation and therefore any comments relating to the case are inappropriate.
- Q. Will the reported loss of a manual describing one of our satellites damage our ability to conduct photo-reconnaissance from space?
- A. The Kampiles case is presently in litigation and therefore any comments relating to the case are inappropriate.
- Q. Since the Soviets reportedly know how good the capabilities of our photographic satellites are, why don't you release some sample pictures so that the American public can know too?
- A. For a number of reasons I must emphasize that both the photographs and analyses based on them remain classified however are available to the President, his senior advisers, and to the Congress.

~~CONFIDENTIAL - XGPR (2)~~  
**UNCLASSIFIED**