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~~(S)~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

May 3, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Defense Support Program (DSP)

Your January 10, 1974 memorandum (BYE-65811-74) requested a paper which would address the problems associated with using "white" Air Force space programs to obscure the mission of NRO programs. Attached is a study which was prepared jointly by representatives of the NRO, Air Force and CIA.

The analysis suggests that DSP is the central Air Force program

[REDACTED]

A key issue to the relaxation of DSP security is its impact

[REDACTED]

The study recommends that present security policies be continued until such time

[REDACTED]

would be appropriate. The study also recommends that the matter be concluded between you and the DCI outside of the ExCom forum since NRO security policy, per se, is not at issue.

RECOMMENDATION: I recommend that you concur in the study as presented and indicate your concurrence directly to the DCI.

*J. W. Plummer*  
J. W. Plummer

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1 Attachment  
Paper on NRP Security  
via White Programs

cc: DCI, SAF, ASD(I)

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NRP SECURITY VIA "WHITE" PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

The Deputy Secretary of Defense requested that a review be made of the overall situation whereby certain normal space programs obscure or cover various activities associated with the conduct of the National Reconnaissance Program. Of special interest was the security of the Defense Support Program (DSP). It was further recommended that the ExCom review the issue.

A limited NRO and Air Staff study was conducted in October 1973. The study suggested that it might be acceptable to release an unclassified DSP mission statement and the location of the CONUS ground station provided that the nature of DSP operations be held under a responsible security control. An assumption was made that the release of these data would not upset the overseas DSP station at Woomera [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The DCI disagreed with the assumption. He requested that the Secretary of Defense withdraw the proposal for public release of the DSP mission statement and take necessary steps to avoid any further declassification of the DSP.

As a consequence of the DCI's request, this review was developed jointly at the direction of the Deputy Secretary of Defense by the NRO, Air Staff and CIA. It examines the history and problems associated with using "white" Air Force space programs to obscure the mission of NRO programs.

POLICIES

Present security policy which surrounds NRO programs stems from national policy created in 1962 when there were no meaningful "white" military space programs. NSC Action 2454 states:

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"The present practice of not identifying individual military space launchings by mission or purpose is sound.... No specific mission would be ascribed to any particular launch."

Since 1962, as the non-reconnaissance segment of the military space program has developed, the national policy has been generally applied to all non-civil launches. Recently, there has been a trend toward identifying programs by name and mission as in the cases of the Defense Communications Satellites and the Air Force Space Test Program. DSP has not been publicly acknowledged as the U.S. warning satellite and the ground stations have not been publicly identified.

Most military launches fall under Category III information policy whereby launches are closed to the media and a cleared statement is released at or shortly after launch giving only time and date of launch and booster used.

Following a 1962 policy decision, the United States has voluntarily registered all of its space launches with the United Nations. All space launching nations, including Russia, have followed this practice, although the quantity of data about each launch varies by country. For example, Russia registers significantly less amplifying data than does the United States, and Japan registers significantly more than any other nation. A registration convention is under deliberation now at the United Nations which is patterned after the relatively limited United States practice. No specific mission data are registered and great care is taken to provide comparable data to the UN on all high altitude satellites

These data preclude fixing of a time relationship with respect to the ground in order that a launch and an object in synchronous orbit cannot be correlated.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN NRO AND "WHITE" PROGRAMS

Within the developmental, launch and operational phases of program activity there have evolved several planned or



fortuitous relationships between NRO and "white" Air Force programs.

[REDACTED]

NRO programs have been conducted under extraordinary security precautions; it historically has been difficult to accord similar tight security to normal programs.

Some normal programs, the DSP, [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] have security constraints which post-date the NRO concept but are affected by it.

[REDACTED]

The pre-1968 era was dominated by NRO needs; the post-1968 period has witnessed a growing interdependence of the normal and NRO programs principally for launch security and ground station political reasons. There are varying impacts on the programs because of this interdependence.

Launch security relationships have evolved to the point that all Cape Kennedy launches of DSP and NRO satellites have been reported by the media as "warning satellite" launches,

[REDACTED]

The security planned by the NRO [REDACTED] paralleled the no comment and no discussion security traditionally employed at Vandenberg. Because of the less stringent security procedures surrounding the DSP development program, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

With respect to the ground stations, the CONUS ground station for DSP was [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

There have been speculations in the press that [REDACTED]. Some speculation predated the actual decision to locate the DSP station [REDACTED].

The DSP Overseas Ground Station is at Woomera, Australia, and is known as the Joint Defence Space Communications Station (JDSCS). [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Agreement for the DSP station was negotiated by the Air Force and State Department in 1969 and the Australian Government has taken great care to withhold information [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

There have been constant and strong pressures on incumbent Australian Governments to reveal the mission [REDACTED] to the public. This was a major issue in the 1972 election. The new government leaders, however, reversed their position at great political risk following the election [REDACTED]

Much care is taken to coordinate all policy [REDACTED] with the Australian leaders. For example, when the Special Access Requirement was removed from DSP in October 1972, the reactions of the government were key to the decision. Only after the government was satisfied that secrecy still would prevail was the DOD decision made to remove Special Access from DSP.

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There is close coordination between the [REDACTED] in order to permit continuation of consistency [REDACTED]. Because of the politically difficult situation, [REDACTED] has been the principal agency relied upon by the Australian Government for assuring "the highest security standards," [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] The Australian Government wishes that no action be taken which would tend to destabilize the existing situation. It has given indications that it views the release of the mission statement and further declassification as possibly leading to destabilization.

With respect to program implications there were three factors considered.

- The imposed security of NRO programs appears on the surface to restrict many of the operational aspects of normal programs. However, under examination, only the public relations aspects of normal programs appear to suffer from tight security. Programs, such as DSP, are constrained from being able to realize benefit from publicity usually accorded a successful and worthwhile operation. [REDACTED]

- Given the fact that there have been considerable data committed to the public domain about warning satellites, the deterrent value of these data has been high in terms of alerting the Soviets to our warning capability in general. It also is noted that additional information probably would be only marginally useful as a further deterrent. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The [REDACTED] presently acquired could easily be denied to the U.S. [REDACTED] should the missions become understood. The IR data collected by DSP are difficult to deny to collection without countermeasures to the satellite system itself. It is noted that the

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Russians currently have a massive and intensive program underway to investigate the nature and character of the overall U.S. space program.

### CONCLUSIONS

- Cover by normal programs for the NRO was virtually nonexistent prior to 1968. Since 1968, cover provided by normal programs [REDACTED]

- The cover [REDACTED] has been of benefit to the NRO in two ways. First, it has obscured the missions of NRO [REDACTED] satellites largely because the media attributed [REDACTED] and this has persisted. Second, it has provided political [REDACTED] in Australia.

- An acceptable level of information about DSP, in terms of informing the Russians in order to establish a "warning deterrent," seems to be in the public domain. [REDACTED]

- The covers provided [REDACTED] in support of photosatellite development and operations appear to be sound and probably enhancing to the normal program and mission needs in support of the Air Force.

- Because of the intense Soviet interest in monitoring the operations of U.S. space programs, a very conservative approach should be followed in the declassification of U.S. military satellite activities.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue for the time being the existing security and information policies for both NRO and normal Air Force programs.

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- Retain for the time being the current DSP security policy.

- Re-examine the Australian political situation [REDACTED] at a future time in order to determine if a change to DSP policy is appropriate.

- [REDACTED]

- Resolve the matter outside the ExCom forum since NRO security policy, per se, is not at issue.

[REDACTED]

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