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USIB-D-46.2/35
24 June 1974

REPORT ON THE
REVIEW OF SECURITY REQUIREMENTS OF THE
NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

1. This report responds to tasking by the Director of Central Intelligence and the Director, National Reconnaissance Office for a review of the need for continuing covert security for the National Reconnaissance Program in today's environment.

2. The review was conducted by a committee chaired by Mr. Robert Singel, Deputy Director, National Reconnaissance Office, with representation from the NRO Staff, NRO Program Managers, the CIA Office of Security's Special Security Center, and the DCI's Intelligence Community Staff. The report was then reviewed by a senior level review group with representatives from the NRO Staff, the NRO programs, the IC Staff, and COMIREX. This senior group recommended additional considerations and a change of format to include arguments on both sides of each consideration. This report reflects the recommended changes. Conclusions begin on page 16 and Recommendations, on page 17.

3. The concerns which fostered tight security controls at the inception of the Program in 1962 were primarily associated with uncertainties of Soviet and international reaction to our space reconnaissance program and the fear of disclosures which could have provided gratuitous technical advantages to the Soviets or stimulated them to take countermeasures.

4. After thirteen years of successful operation of the Program, the Review Committee finds noticeable changes in the environment which bear on the feasibility and desirability of modifying security controls.

a. The Soviets have their own reconnaissance satellite program. There is at least a tacit agreement with the Soviets about non-interference with, if not acceptance of, the use of satellites as a

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"national means of verification" of any strategic arms limitation treaty. Conversely, other nations are questioning the legitimacy of uncontrolled observation from space although the concern is presently focused on ERTS.

b. A large volume of speculative information about the U.S. and the USSR space reconnaissance activities has surfaced in the public domain. Speculative information in the U.S. mass media has been lent credence by mention in a report of the Special Committee to Study Questions Related to Secret and Confidential Government Documents. The appearance of this totality of information has fostered a general recognition in the world at large of the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance from space.

c. There has been a recent decision to lower security controls on some satellite photography by removing it from compartmented security controls and allowing photography and derived information to be used at the Secret-NOFORN level.

d. The Congress has recently shown a greater interest and curiosity about the NRP than heretofore and at least one knowledgeable committee chairman has stated that it is increasingly difficult to maintain the past practices of limiting knowledge only to committee chairmen and their designated colleagues. However, there is evidence that the committee chairmen are still retaining tight control.

e. U.S. civil agencies have expressed the belief that the space program may satisfy additional needs within their disciplines and interests beyond those already identified. Today, assistance can only be provided if the civil agencies are willing to comply with the safeguards accorded the product materials.

f. Recent trends in the political and judicial spheres of Government argue for public candor unless it can be proved that such candor damages the national security. The present security controls which prohibit official public discussion of satellite reconnaissance or even official admission of the "fact of" do not allow such candor.

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g. The NRO's cover for activities and personnel as a pseudo line element of the Department of Defense may have been jeopardized as a result of a recent acknowledgment to the press that the NRO is "an office through which certain intelligence matters are administered...by a senior Air Force civilian official."

THE PROBLEM

5. Recognizing the arguments for tight security but considering the changes that have occurred, the Committee examined the appropriateness, advantages, and disadvantages of continuing the uniquely tight security system imposed over the NRP and the NRO at the inception of the Program. While many specific current problems were discussed, it was generally agreed that recent changes in the environment have not altered the need for tight security of the NRP and its activities; however, the recent publicity about the NRO and the official acknowledgment of its existence require that a new public disclosure cut-off point be established. To establish this cut-off, arbitrary levels of disclosure were selected and the pros and cons of each level reviewed. The considerations reviewed are as follows:

- a. Retain pre-publicity security policy.
- b. Formally declassify the names and initials of the NRO and NRP but not acknowledge satellite reconnaissance as the mission of the NRO.
- c. Declassify the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance.
- d. Declassify the identity of the Director and the Deputy Director.
- e. Declassify the identity of the Staff organization and release information on participating organizations, budgets, and personnel.
- f. Declassify the identity of the program offices, budgets, and associated contractors but not program details.
- g. Decompartment but not declassify all aspects of the Program and organization, including programs and program objectives.

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DISCUSSION

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6. In its considerations, the Committee was continually mindful of the need to maintain secrecy around essential elements of the Program while giving balanced recognition to the fact that time and events may have overtaken some elements of concern for which the security features were originally imposed. A basic thread which ran through all of the considerations was the need to retain a credible security posture by not retaining a classification on information which is no longer sensitive and which is already in the public domain. This concern dominated the considerations of these seven levels of disclosure. Discussion of each level of disclosure addresses those considerations important in determining a position on each point. Some of the considerations could be considered arguments, but, depending on the particular viewpoint, could be variously interpreted. Every effort has been made to identify pros and cons which are generally agreed. These apply directly to the consideration under discussion and, except for the option to retain the pre-publicity security policy, are generally cumulative as additional security constraints are relaxed.

a. Retain Pre-Publicity Security Policy

(1) Strong reasons still exist for maintaining the tight security that has been the hallmark of the [REDACTED] Compartmentation has made it possible to maintain virtually leakproof security which precludes the need for judgments as to who has access. The effectiveness of a security program is dependent upon a strong personal sense of obligation by all participants. The rigidity of [REDACTED] policies regarding publicity and accesses has generated that sense of personal obligation and should be perpetuated. U.S. companies, particularly those with foreign business, prefer the anonymity of compartmented systems as it eliminates public resentment against participation in reconnaissance (spy) activities and possible disruption of business. Public hostility could dissuade companies possessing unique and "only-available" capabilities from participating in the NRP. The objective of the System is to protect technical capabilities of U.S. reconnaissance systems from adversaries, particularly those technical secrets which would be of use to the Soviet space reconnaissance systems and would provide guidance for their countermeasures capability. The [REDACTED] [REDACTED] has been extremely successful.

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(2) The NRP is a crucial, irreplaceable national asset. It is vulnerable to international political pressures from countries being observed. Public discussion by U.S. officials will practically insure public complaint and political countermeasures by offended nations in the same way that public acknowledgment of spying by human agents always necessitates public response and political countermeasures. In spite of the general acknowledgment that the U.S. has "technical means of verification," no nation is now accosted by the "fact of" and, therefore, is not required to protest the invasion of its national sovereignty.

(3) Following are the pros and cons of this consideration.

Pro

(a) Non-affirmation policy discourages additional inquiry.

(b) Definite, easily recognizable security bounds facilitate tight security.

(c) Cover is simple, logical, and--to date--completely successful.

(d) Because of the above, the Program shows a low profile as an intelligence target, does not compromise critical technical information; and develops high security consciousness among all participants.

Con

(a) Does not recognize information demands of an "open society" as represented by the media and a small group of Congressmen.

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(b) Precludes spokesmen from discussing "non-secrets" and thereby detracts from the importance of valid secrets.

b. The Names and Initials

(1) Between the first exposure in 1971 and mid-1973, there have been about seven references in the public domain to the National Reconnaissance Program or Office. These were considered speculative reporting since no official source was credited. The revelations were ignored and the lack of follow-up inquiry or subsequent revelations may be indicative of the appropriateness of this course of action. On 12 October 1973, the National Reconnaissance Office was pointedly mentioned in a report of the Special [Congressional] Committee to Study Questions Related to Secret and Confidential Government Documents. Although the committee was unaware that it had used a classified title, this action represents an official acknowledgment of the Office and has been determined to be sufficient grounds to consider the name of the Office unclassified. This position was officially adopted by the CIA in February 1974 when it withdrew legal objection to mention of the National Reconnaissance Office as classified material in Marchetti's proposed manuscript, CIA and the Cult of Intelligence.

(2) It should be noted that the present 1965 charter of the NRO represents the joint interests of the CIA and the DOD. It incorporates many of the precepts of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (reaffirmed in 1974) and was developed to assure rapid response to the requirements of the intelligence community. For some thirteen years, the system has fulfilled its purpose well. All managers have had unique authorities but have also been monitored closely in both the technical and financial areas. The system permits concentration of authority in highly capable program offices and dispenses with long lines

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of approval and control. It was agreed that a relaxing of security should not be the basis for "regularizing."

(3) The significant impacts of declassifying the names and initials:

Pro

(a) Formally acknowledges current situation and thereby establishes security guidelines.

(b) Eliminates chiding of security policy which attempts to protect non-secrets.

(c) Permits normalization of budget procedures.

Con

(a) Tacitly admits overhead reconnaissance.

(b) Creates confusion as to limits of disclosure, e.g.: Being an unclassified organization, can employees admit affiliation?

(c) Provides data for media and foreign intelligence speculation and investigation, at least requiring some identification of organization.

(d) Alerts the total Congress to activities now closely held by committee chairmen.

(e) Normalization of budget procedures will tend toward normalization of organization at significant cost to programs in time and money.

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(f) Confuses personnel security, as it is normal for personnel to admit employment if working for an unclassified organization. Without acknowledgment of the organizational structure, this is impossible.

(4) It has been generally recognized in the Committee that any declassifying or decompartmenting of information now in the [REDACTED] breeds additional pressures for more information and additional release, particularly under the "open society" posture required of the DOD. It was therefore agreed that the DCI as the ultimate agent for the security of the NRO should continue in this role as this acts as a counterforce for those DOD organizations prone to press for publicity and inclined to easily yield to pressures from the media.

c. Declassify the "Fact Of"

(1) Discussions relating to declassifying the "fact of" showed particular concern in three areas. First, it was noted that declassification of the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance can be applied to both photographic and SIGINT satellites. Second, it was agreed that implementation of any new policy would have to emphasize that the admission of the "fact of" at either the Secret or unclassified level still excludes any "facts about." And, finally, there was great concern that official acknowledgment of our use of intelligence satellites might trigger the Soviets or third countries to raise political objections in an international forum and thereby hinder our unilateral operations. There is also considerable feeling that the "fact of" should be acknowledged prior to considering subsequent declassification actions.

(2) The concern with credibility was the primary argument favoring declassification. The large volume of information,

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particularly in trade journals, has established a general recognition of photographic reconnaissance from space and it is doubtful that the difference between "official" and "speculative" material is often recognized. It was felt that continued insistence on tight security for "open" secrets reduces overall credibility and erodes the integrity of security around the technology and the operations which still need to be protected. USIB-D-46.2.

(3) Foreign reaction to an open admission of satellite reconnaissance appears to be the most serious potential problem but it is recognized as one that falls primarily in the political field rather than one to be decided by the security needs of the intelligence system. The most significant threat is the possibility of a U.N. treaty banning surveillance or reconnaissance from space without the concurrence of the country being surveilled. Various non-aligned countries have expressed significant sensitivities about space surveillance and, in fact, Brazil has tabled a treaty in the U.N. to regulate observations from space. Recognition of the "fact of" space reconnaissance would likely not derogate the collection mission of the NRO, as long as restraints of international treaties do not preclude mission activity, and would enhance credibility in our claims on other security matters.

(4) The arguments related to this consideration are aligned as follows:

Pro

(a) Provides credibility for the need to retain other secrets if no effort is made to retain the classification of non-secrets.

(b) Permits easier access to NRP product for both military and civilian use, including mapping and earth resources surveys.

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Con

(a) Risks censure of overhead reconnaissance by the U.N. as a result of complaints that the national sovereignty of other nations is being violated.

(b) Under pressure of international disapproval, friendly countries may withdraw base rights.

(c) Represents an irreversible action if problems develop as a result of United Nations consideration.

d. Declassify the Identity of the Director and the Deputy Director

(1) Although the National Reconnaissance Office has been acknowledged as "an office through which certain intelligence matters are administered...by a senior Air Force civilian official," no specific identifications have been made. While there is little likelihood of a specific effort being made to obtain this additional bit of information, the question which elicited the above response was directed at identifying the director of the satellite reconnaissance program.

(2) The fact that identifying the Director would show that he is both the Under Secretary of the Air Force and the director of the satellite reconnaissance program should have little effect as the Director has already been identified as a "senior Air Force civilian official" without there being any subsequent perturbations. However, the questions already raised about his former employment with Lockheed would indicate that Lockheed's involvement in NRC programs is well known to the media.

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(3) Identification of the Deputy Director would raise questions related to the CIA involvement. The degree of this concern is difficult to assess but could run the gamut from support for the DCI's involvement in all major intelligence efforts to consternation that the Program is not merely a reconnaissance effort but is a bona fide "spy" operation. While this is recognized by those in the "trade" as being a matter of semantics, great emotions are often aroused when the CIA is involved. However, there are arguments on both sides:

Pro

(a) It provides a focal point for an identified organization and simplifies contacts with the media and the non-classified or non-compartmented sectors of Government.

(b) It eliminates a cover problem for both the DNRO and the DDNRO.

Con

(a) The media would have two separate focal points to exploit for different avenues of inquiry: One relative to activities of the NRO and the other to the role of the CIA.

(b) It would subject both officials to normal marketing pressures and could complicate the utilization of streamlined management procedures.

(c) It could open the Director to the usual Congressional inquiries and pressures related to possible procurement from "home state" business interests.

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(d) It would identify the key individuals and by a review of their associations would focus intelligence penetrations on NRP operating elements, including contractors.

e. Declassify the Identity of the Staff Organization and Release Information on Participating Organizations, Budgets, and Personnel

(1) A logical fall-out of identifying the "names and initials" and the principal officers would be further inquiry related to the composition of the organization, its budgets, and its personnel. No other organization except nefarious groups such as the Mafia are known by name and top leaders, but without information on the organization. Pressures from the media would be aimed at simply ferretting out that which is secret. Pressures from industry would be to develop a knowledge of possible forums in which there is a marketing potential. And, finally, pressures would come from inside the Government to determine the extent to which they, too, could use streamlined management procedures or, conversely, the reasons why the NRO should not be normalized. The effect of this change would be as follows:

Pro

(a) Would eliminate burden of organizational cover and ease personnel-related actions.

(b) Would not require cover for Staff personnel and could thus allow recognition to a greater degree than is now possible.

(c) Would permit Congress and the public to know how this portion of the Defense budget is being spent.

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Con

- (a) Would focus intelligence penetration efforts.
 - (b) Would permit the opposition to know how a portion of the Defense budget is being spent.
 - (c) Would make definite boundaries of security now enjoyed by these programs unclear and require security judgments or precise knowledge by all cleared persons, thereby eroding security control of the program.
 - (d) Acknowledgment of CIA involvement may lead to criticism of past covered operations.
 - (e) Would expose "fact of" space reconnaissance through association of NRO and SAFUS and the Office of Space Systems.
 - (f) If such disclosure induced efforts to normalize management, increased personnel would be required.
 - (g) Marketing efforts would have a broader range for contacts and contractor relationships would be more difficult.
 - (h) The potential for additional audits, investigations, and facilities inspections would be increased.
- (2) The probable pressures to normalize NRO activities as a result of declassifying to this extent can be viewed

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as a pro or a con, depending on the individual's objectives. USIB-D46.2/3

f. Declassify the Identity of the Program Offices, Budgets, and Associated Contractors But Not Program Results

(1) With the disclosure of the headquarters components, it will be obvious that additional management appendages exist to manage the funds that are budgeted. Lines of inquiry that lead to CIA may be of political interest but specific program interest would probably be dropped because of previous blank walls that have been encountered. Other programs would most likely receive considerable press attention as any program that has been so well hidden for so long must have a good story. There are few virtues to the declassification and significant drawbacks.

Pro

(a) Because of more visibility, it may bring forth additional competition from contractors whose capability was not previously appreciated.

(b) Would significantly reduce the need for security in that only a small body of information would remain classified.

Con

(a) Significantly broadens the target base for intelligence penetration.

(b) Identification of contractors often permits easy deduction of type of program, e.g., Eastman Kodak indicates photography.

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(c) Could eliminate contractor participation because of impact of reconnaissance program affiliation on commercial market.

(d) Broadens sabotage base, particularly as related to high reliability parts, by exposing program participation to unwitting subcontractors. Additional physical security programs at additional cost would be required.

(e) The proliferating of conditions of security make personnel security virtually impossible. It also provides such a broad base of inquiry that program details are likely to be made public.

(f) The disappearance of the tight constraints of security and the associated aura of importance on contractors will have a derogatory effect on morale and a subsequent effect on security.

g. Decompartment But Not Declassify All Aspects of the Program and Organization, Including Programs and Program Objectives

(1) By definition, compartments are utilized to restrict the availability of information to a definite audience without increasing the classification. Considering the number of high priority programs involving many new technologies handled by the NRO, the compartmentation system was the obvious answer. In essence, each program has a bigot list and the total program receives a second security wrap provided by the overall [redacted]. Only a similar system could provide such definite security bounds without restricting the programs. Obviously, there are some arguments on both sides.

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Pro

(a) To some observers, the elimination of compartments represents a simplification of the security system.

Con

(a) Decreases security of programs and increases the potential for compromise.

(b) Complicates security procedures, particularly related to contractor work areas.

(c) Obscures security bounds.

CONCLUSIONS

7. The deliberations of the Committee and the Senior Review Group showed a considerable disparity of views. In general, there was a strong desire to continue security practices that have been normal procedure in the ~~System~~ since its inception. They felt that the present system provides security boundaries that are easy to define and this in turn protects technical capabilities, permits management efficiencies, and shortens program schedules. The problems of protecting non-secrets was of concern but the practice of declassifying the leaked information which is true becomes a convenient checklist approach for investigative reporting or intelligence penetrations. It was their conclusion that the ~~System~~ as now utilized should be retained to the extent possible but that serious consideration be given to each problem and security be relaxed when appropriate.

8. A second viewpoint was strongly held by CIA representatives, excluding representatives of the Program Office. This position leaned toward relaxing the System by declassifying the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance, the existence and purpose of the NRO, and the size of the NRP but continuing compartmented control over all else. In their judgment, this would simplify security procedures, would comply with Executive Order 11652 on classification policy, and would obviate the problem of maintaining security of non-secrets.

9. With these considerations in mind, it was generally agreed that ~~should~~ continue to protect

mission targets, operational information, and technology of the collection systems. However, it was recognized that some modifications to the System should be made in light of the current state of public knowledge.

a. Security procedures should be modified to be consistent with official statements acknowledging the National Reconnaissance Office. This will require formal declassification of the title, "National Reconnaissance Office," and of the initials, "NRO."

b. The DCI should recommend to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs that the "fact of" satellite reconnaissance be declassified consistent with national policy. The Committee agreed that the programs had little to gain from this declassification but there was little doubt that this was in the class of non-secrets. Assuming no political repercussions from foreign countries, it was apparent that admission of the "fact of" would not be detrimental to the intelligence community. However, as "political repercussions" fall within the scope of foreign policy, final decision would have to be made by the Assistant to the President.

c. The NRO should maintain an active information program to enable members of Congress and Federal department heads to better fulfill their responsibilities.

d. The NRO should continue its policy of responding to public and media queries rather than engage in any kind of public release policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. As a result of these discussions, it is recommended:

a. That Conclusions 9a through 9d above be approved.

b. That the chairmen of appropriate Congressional committees be briefed on any security changes prior to accomplishment.

c. That, with the above recommended exceptions, the strict security controls of the [redacted] be continued.

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e. That information provided in response to queries be in accord with the above recommendations and that all holders of ~~██~~ TALENT-KEYHOLE clearances be briefed on this policy and the continuing need for strict security.

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