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OLC #78-5365/4

14 NOV 1978

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DCI/RM 78-5462

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
VIA: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
FROM: John E. Koehler
Deputy to the DCI for Resource Management
SUBJECT: Reactions to the President's Acknowledgment
of the Fact of Satellite Photoreconnaissance
REFERENCE: State Dept Memo to Dr. Brzezinski, same subject,
dtd Oct 14, 1978

1. (U) Action Requested: None. For your information only.

2. (C) Background:

a. The President directed declassification of the "fact of" satellite photoreconnaissance and publicly acknowledged this fact in a 1 October speech on space policy.

b. The Department of State was tasked, by the NSC, to prepare and implement a consultation plan to minimize the risk of adverse foreign reaction. This plan was implemented just prior to the President's announcement, (during the period from 27-29 September).

c. Reference (attached) contains the State Department's summary of reactions to the President's announcement.

3. (S) Discussion:

a. No adverse reactions have been noted among those of the Congress, the U.S. public, the Soviets, our Allies, the U.N., and foreign media. Soviet Minister Vasev did note, however, that official U.S. acknowledgment could touch on the sensitivities of third countries and that they may have some problems.

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SUBJECT: Reactions to the President's Acknowledgement of
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b. The discussion of the U.S. public reaction is interesting because it points out (as we had predicted at the SPRC meeting) that acknowledgment of the "fact of" has not completely relieved public concern about verification of a SALT TWO agreement and that the public continues to show skepticism and a fascination with "hardware". The State Department memo concludes that "In the end, some discussion of satellite photoreconnaissance beyond "fact of" may be required to overcome public cynicism. An interagency task force chaired by the DCI is examining the specific issue of a selective and phased release of photoreconnaissance imagery. An options paper is due to the PRC (Space) by February 15, 1979." This conclusion underlines my previous comments to you about the importance of the DCI sponsored study on release of photoreconnaissance imagery and my concern about pressures for early release in support of SALT TWO ratification.

c. I have taken steps to circulate this memo within the Intelligence Community.

[Redacted Signature]

John E. Koehler

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Attachment:

State Dept Memo [Redacted]
[Redacted]

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Washington, D.C. 20505

Received: 31 Oct, 1978

October 23, 1978

MEMORANDUM TO: DCI - [redacted]
NASA - Mr. Williamson
OSD/ISA - Maj. O'Hern
JCS - Maj. Genega

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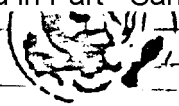
FROM: PM/SA - Arnold Kanter

Reactions to the President's Acknowledgement of
the Fact of Satellite Photoreconnaissance

Frank Press's office asked the State Department to report on reactions to the declassification of the fact of satellite photoreconnaissance. Our summary was intended to survey the responses we've received so far and to note some areas in which follow-up may be needed.

The attached copy is provided for your information.

UNCLASSIFIED
W/SECRET ATTACHMENT



Washington DC 20520

COPIES TO:

October 14, 1978

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VP

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI
DR. FRANK PRESS

THE WHITE HOUSE

NR
ES
CDA
F-WH

Subject: Reactions to President's Acknowledgment of
the Fact of Satellite Photoreconnaissance

The following is a summary of reactions to the
President's announcement contained in his October 1
speech on space policy.

Congressional

Beginning on September 27, State Department/
Congressional Relations contacted the following congress-
sional offices about the decision to declassify and
acknowledge "fact of" in the President's October 1
speech: Bayh, Byrd, Church, Clark, Cranston, Culver,
Glenn, Hamilton, Hart, Kennedy, Mathias, Pell, Proxmire,
Stennis, and Zablocki.

The general reaction was that this announcement
would be a bit of a non-event, but they were glad the
Administration was finally officially acknowledging
what had been an "open secret" for some time. They
did recognize that this would make the Administration's
job easier in explaining verification of SALT. There
were no negative responses on the Hill during the
consultations nor following the President's speech.

US Public Reactions

Verification is probably the paramount public con-
cern about SALT. We must be able to deal with this
issue in a concrete and easily understood fashion if
we are to avoid the untenable position of saying
"trust us."

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The French DCI to -- 2 -- has informed privately that declassification of the fact of satellite photo-reconnaissance does not change the unfavorable US view of State Department officials have had about 40 speaking engagements since the fact of photoreconnaissance satellites was declassified. This preliminary experience indicates that declassification of the "fact of" has increased public confidence but has not completely relieved public concern about verification of a SALT TWO agreement. Speakers have tried to direct the discussion to broader aspects of verification (principles, elements of the Treaty which enhance verification, etc.) but the public continues to show skepticism and a fascination with "hardware." The Government's need to be able publicly to explain and As the debates about SALT ratification proceed and we get a better feel for the precise nature of the public's concerns, we will better be able to judge whether any additional steps may be necessary or desirable. In the end, some discussion of satellite photoreconnaissance beyond "fact of" may be required to overcome public cynicism. An interagency task force chaired by the DCI is examining the specific issue of a selective and phased release of photoreconnaissance imagery. An options paper is due to the PRC (Space) by February 15, 1979.

Soviets

As far, there has been no notable reaction to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Goodby's information Soviet Minister Vasev on September 29. Vasev, speaking personally, said that the Soviet Union would not have any problem with the President's acknowledgment and noted that photoreconnaissance satellites were the "backbone" of both sides' verification capabilities. He said, however, that official US acknowledgment could touch on the sensitivities of third countries and that they might have some problems. He observed that photoreconnaissance satellites had never been officially acknowledged by the Soviet Union. Vasev expressed some concern that declassification could have ramifications for a number of issues such as those being dealt with in the UN Outer Space Committee.

There has been no further Soviet diplomatic response since the September 29 Goodby-Vasev meeting.

Allies

Ambassador Bennett informed the NATO allies at the September 27 NAC. The announcement was received without reaction or comment.

The French DCM to NATO was informed privately that declassification of the fact of satellite photo-reconnaissance does not change the unfavorable US view of the French proposal for an international verification agency. The French DCM expressed disappointment.

Except for Australia, the other allies who were informed made no comment or reaction. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs requested additional information, including the text of the President's speech, to ensure that they could fully brief government ministers.

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The Australian actions primarily were precautionary. Department of Foreign Affairs officials predicted no particular problems and none have arisen as a result of the President's speech.

United Nations

Thus far, there has been no delegate reaction to the President's announcement. It is likely, however, that interested governments still are considering what public position they should take. They may express their interests and possible concerns as early as October 16 when the UN Special Political Committee addresses outer space issues. Work is underway to formulate a US presentation.

We also are likely to encounter related issues in the weeks and months ahead:

French proposal. The USG has been trying to dissuade France from tabling a proposal at the UNGA calling for the creation of international satellite verification. Now that the US has publicly acknowledged the role of satellites in verifying compliance with arms control agreements, we will face the task of making a persuasive public case for opposing international verification if the French go ahead with their plan.

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Accusations of "Spying." There may be an effort in the UN to condemn as espionage or a violation of international law either (a) all satellite photo-reconnaissance undertaken without the permission of the sensed State or, more likely, (b) all such reconnaissance except in the context of verification of arms control agreements or with the sensed State's prior approval. If such charges are made or a resolution along these lines is proposed, our response will be to reiterate the need for satellite verification of arms control agreements and to stress that no principle of international law prohibits remote sensing of the earth from outer space.

UN Outer Space Committee (OSC). If the issue of "fact of" is raised in the OSC, we will distinguish between remote sensing of the earth and its national environment and photoreconnaissance for arms control verification, and will try to get the latter issue referred to other UN forums.

Certain of our positions on principles relating to remote sensing, including our stance on a long-standing Soviet proposal on resolution limits for open dissemination, will need to be reassessed in time for the meetings of the Legal Subcommittee and the Scientific Subcommittee which begin in February. That review will begin soon.

Foreign Media Reaction

A review of FBIS reports indicates that the President's acknowledgment of satellite photoreconnaissance was reported in a wide variety of countries, but was not covered extensively. A few stories were supportive, most were simply brief news reports, and some were critical. No pattern of reactions is apparent: the story was covered by the East European press in about the same way as the Western European and Third World press. The President's acknowledgment apparently was not covered by Soviet media. There is no evidence of continuing foreign media interest.

The content of most of the stories appeared to be drawn from Jody Powell's backgrounder which drew attention to the fact that this was the first time that the US had officially acknowledged satellite photoreconnaissance. Many stories noted that this simply was official confirmation of what was already well known.

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The tone of most of the stories was "matter-of-fact-reporting." The number of explicit commentaries and editorials was negligible. On the other hand, the overwhelming proportion of reports referred to "spy satellites, several referred to "espionage," and some characterized the President as "admitting" or "confessing" the fact of satellite photoreconnaissance. A large number of stories simply reported that the US had officially admitted that it uses satellites to "spy on the Soviet Union and other countries" and failed to make the connection to SALT and arms control verification.

Notwithstanding these apparent pejoratives, there was little explicit criticism. This may simply reflect a cynical resignation about the conduct of great powers. The context, however, suggests that in many cases, reporters simply used "spy" as a synonym for "reconnaissance." To some extent, use of these terms also may be artifacts of translating the President's speech into the native language and then translating the resulting foreign language reports back into English.

No ICA posts have reported significant local media reaction nor have defense attaches detected major media attention to the announcement. The Bureau of Intelligence and Research has not received any reactions or responses through its channels.

Peter Tarnoff
Peter Tarnoff
Executive Secretary

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE
TO: <i>Legislative Council</i>		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	
<i>7049</i>	<i>HQ</i>	
REMARKS:		
FROM:		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	EXTENSION

FORM NO. 241
1 FEB 55

REPLACES FORM 36-8
WHICH MAY BE USED.

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