

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
ROUTING SLIP**

*Memo
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TO:

		ACTION	INFO	DATE	INITIAL
1	DCI		X		
2	DDCI		X		
3	EXDIR				
4	D/ICS				
5	DDI	X			
6	DDA				
7	DDO				
8	DDS&T		X		
9	Chm/NIC				
10	GC				
11	IG				
12	Compt				
13	D/OLL				
14	D/PAO		X		
15	D/PERS				
16	VC/NIC				
17	ES		X		
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SUSPENSE		1600, 15 Aug 86			
		Date			

Remarks To 5: Please provide response to DCI question.

Executive Secretary
12 Aug 86

Date

Office of Current Production and Analytic Support

CIA Operations Center

Executive Registry

86- 3665

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Photo satellites for media worry intelligence brass

By Warren Strobel
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Allen W. Dulles, one of a handful of government officials who got to see the photographs brought back by the first U-2 spyplanes in the 1950s, was astonished by what the U-2's cameras could recognize from 68,000 feet — and above.

"I was able," the first director of the Central Intelligence Agency boasted in an interview, "to get a look at every blade of grass in the Soviet Union."

Nearly 30 years and one Soviet nuclear accident later, every field — albeit not every blade of grass — is becoming familiar to a group whose mention would have surprised anyone connected to the intelligence agencies or the government in the days when spies-in-the-sky were first developed: the nation's newsgathering organizations.

Now it's not spy planes the editors want, but satellites.

Spurred by the 1984 commercialization of the U.S. LANDSAT satellite system and the February launch of France's SPOT imaging satellite, reporters and editors are looking with increasing seriousness at the prospect of gathering news from space.

National security issues, not technology, stand in their way.

What had been vague stirrings were galvanized in early May when the Soviet's Chernobyl nuclear power plant began to melt down.

In what might well be remembered as a watershed in the history of news satellites, newspapers and networks barred from the Ukraine eagerly snapped up pictures of the smoldering reactor from first LANDSAT and then more detailed images from SPOT.

"The news media comes along and says, 'We need to see Chernobyl and we can't see it,'" said David S. Julyan, vice president of sales and marketing for SPOT Image Corp. "And we say, 'Great, we'll show it to you.'"

At a recent hearing of a House science and technology subcommittee, conservative Rep. Robert Walker articulated what many reporters and editors have been thinking.

"You really do change the nature of news gathering in the world," the Pennsylvania Republican said. "You literally could cover riots in South Africa using remote sensing technology. And if the South African government didn't like it, so what?"

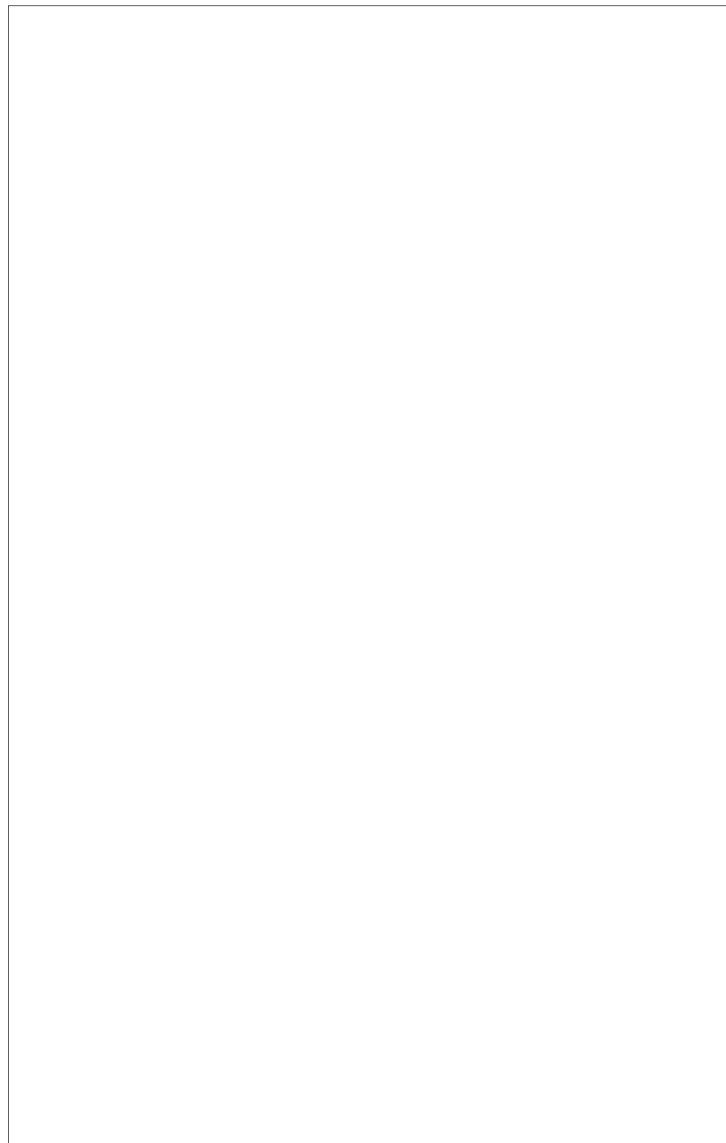
But the implications of private satellites with remote-sensing capabilities — a catch-all term for sensors that view the earth from space — broadcasting detailed images to millions of American homes were not lost on the intelligence community.

A former CIA official who viewed SPOT's Chernobyl pictures said, according to one source, he was "not used to seeing pictures like that outside the agency."

As the circle of information reserved for Defense Department officials and political leaders grows smaller, the prospect of an electronic reporter orbiting the globe could spark a battle among giants.

"There are strong barriers and vested interests that, in my opinion, have to be accommodated somehow," said

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Frederick B. Henderson III, president of the GEOSAT committee, which promotes commercial use of remote-sensing technology.

"All those things ultimately will have to be ruled on by the courts," he said.

Some see a "MEDIASAT" as a threat; others, as the greatest advance in reporting technology since the typewriter.

"For me as a news gatherer, the logical next step is to put a camera into space," said Mark Brender, an ABC News assignment editor and chairman of the Radio-Television News Directors Association's Media in Space Committee.

Mr. Brender is spearheading an effort to modify two 1984 laws which regulate private satellite launches.

"To me, it's plain as day that systems like this will be operating in the public's interest around the world," he said. "The 'Model T' technology is floating over our heads right now — SPOT and LANDSAT."

ABC News alone has broadcast satellite pictures of Chernobyl, New York harbor, Libyan airfields and Soviet naval bases near Murmansk.

Last Monday night, CBS and ABC aired SPOT images showing new activity at a nuclear test facility in the Soviet Union, which has a unilateral moratorium on nuclear weapons testing.

"Can the media get into arms control verification?" asks Mr. Brender.

SPOT and EOSAT, the joint venture that runs the two-satellite LANDSAT system for the U.S. government, both adhere to a principle of space law accepted by most Western nations. Called "open skies," it generally allows one nation to take pictures of another from space.

"We will provide any image of anything in the world to anybody who asks for it and can pay the commercial rate," Mr. Julyan said.

Such statements raise the specter of a news broadcast, perhaps of troops massing along the Iran-Iraq border, aiding one side or the other.

Said Mr. Brender: "I don't care who it helps. It's news."

That worries Stansfield Turner, a retired admiral and former CIA director.

"It certainly would if it was the U.S. lining up for the attack," Adm. Turner said. "We certainly don't want the American media leading to the death of American soldiers or the defeat of the American army."

Mr. Turner advocates establishing an 'open skies agency' that would filter declassified intelligence satellite photographs to the public.

But he conceded that a media-owned satellite is virtually inevitable — a judgment echoed by dozens of individuals in academia, industry, the news media and government.

"Oh, I don't think there's anything we can do about it," CIA Director William Casey told the American Society of Newspaper Editors in April. "I expect that large news organizations will have one of those satellites themselves one of these days."

The real question may not be whether a media satellite exists, but how well it "sees."

Remote-sensing satellites do not take photographs, but measure electromagnetic energy emanating or reflected from the Earth, handing over the digitalized data to computers which form a "picture."

A satellite that can distinguish fine details of a jet fighter sitting on a runway poses more of a national security quandary than one that can merely see the U.S. Capitol.

At a meeting three years ago to discuss LANDSAT's commercialization, Defense Department officials said any commercial satellite which could distinguish objects less than 10 meters square would not receive a license because of "national security concerns," according to Mr. Henderson, who attended the meeting.

A secret presidential directive reportedly authorizes a 10-meter limit for civilian remote-sensing satellites, although Mr. Julyan and EOSAT President Chuck Williams deny knowledge of it.

Currently, sensors on the LANDSAT satellite can recognize any object 30 meters square. SPOT, orbiting 517 miles above the earth, has a 10-meter resolution in black-and-white and a 20-meter resolution in color.

By contrast, the resolution of military reconnaissance satellite sensors, although classified, is reputed to be in the inches.

"It's not so much a question of spy satellite for hire as it is of taking today's technology and using it to expand public knowledge of the entire globe," said Mr. Julyan. "And I don't have any problem with that."

Ironically, it is two 1984 laws aimed at commercializing the remote-sensing and space launch industries that could restrict what type of system the media — or anyone else — puts into orbit.

The Land Remote-Sensing Commercialization Act of 1984 and the Commercial Space Launch Act allow the commerce and transportation secretaries, respectively, to withhold satellite and space launch licenses on the grounds of national security — a term that is undefined in the legislation.

Mr. Brender calls them "some amazing prohibitions that just reek with prior restraint."

"The Supreme Court has made it clear that the First Amendment pro-

report the news, but also its right to gather the news," spokesmen for the radio-TV news directors and other news organizations wrote in a letter to the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

A similar letter — both were designed to influence the torturous federal rule-making process — was sent to the Transportation Department. That department has modified its rules somewhat; NOAA has yet to respond.

"The question really seems to be one of when you are talking about First Amendment rights and when you are talking about access to particular equipment or installations," said NOAA lawyer John Milholland. "To what extent does denial of a license or restriction of a license . . . in effect amount to restriction of the press?"

"If there are national security concerns, that has to be primary," said Rep. Bill Nelson, Florida Democrat. Mr. Nelson's House Science and Technology space subcommittee is considering holding fall hearings on the subject.

In the meantime, Mr. Julyan predicts — and hopes — that media use of his systems will continue to grow.

"I very purposely look for tomorrow's news stories that have remote-sensing applications and program the [satellite's] computer" to retrieve an image, he said. "If the Great Salt Lake floods to the point it becomes a news item, we will have ready, not that day's shot, but an image."

But Mr. Julyan concedes that SPOT — which can view every point on the earth each three and a half days — was not designed with news deadlines and events like Chernobyl in mind.

"We jumped on it and diverted all of our resources to acquiring, processing and distributing that image," he said. "It really requires an event of the Chernobyl type to do that."

A MEDIASAT system, estimated to cost as much as \$300 million, would need faster processing of images and the ability to get to a given location more rapidly.

"The design would be different, the constraints on the system would be different," said Carl F. Schueler, a former engineer at the Hughes Aircraft Co.'s Space Sensors Lab, which designed LANDSAT's sensors.

"If they're willing to put up enough satellites, pay enough money, you could in principle get global coverage," he said.

"There have been some initial exploratory discussions" about building satellite sensors for the media, said Aram Mika, manager of the Hughes lab.

And there is one final concern.

"There is this Orwellian business about remote sensing," said GEOSAT's Mr. Henderson. "There's always that fear in all of us. . . . Would you like somebody monitoring

"This is a real technology of freedom. But some will look at it as a technology of terror," Mr. Brender said. "I would hope the public would view this as the next logical frontier for journalism to cross ... an entirely new source of information for their good."

Mr. Brender's is concerned less with public acceptance than with whether freedom of the press will go into space — aboard a sensor-carrying satellite or aboard the shuttle if the stalled journalist-in-space program is revived.

"In an environment where there is no law," he said, "precedence is everything."