

MEMORANDUM FOR [REDACTED]

May 20, 1992

Subject: Request for Evaluation of NRO Declassification

The DNRO directed selected NRO staff and program office individuals to study various forms of an overt NRO. The profile of an overt NRO would be as described in the final report of the DCI Task Force on the National Reconnaissance Office [REDACTED]. This report has been briefed to the DCI and SECDEF. Although Mr. Gates was initially in favor of the recommendations expressed by the task force, he withheld final approval after Mr. Cheney expressed reservations about declassifying certain NRO facts until he clearly understood the ramifications of such an action. Section VII, *Security and Classification Issues*, is attached for reference. Also, I have attached a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) question-for-the-record addressing the declassification issue that we received following Mr. Gates' testimony.

Mr. Faga's concern is that he does not feel he can make a convincing argument to Congress that acknowledging minimal facts about the NRO could reasonably be expected to cause damage to the national security. This is based on the past official acknowledgment of satellite photoreconnaissance in 1978 as well as pervasive public knowledge of an NRO with comments by former DCIs in their unclassified books.

Our task is to identify damage and concerns and then plan actions needed to mitigate damage. We are at the stage of building an implementation plan of specific actions necessary to accomplish a declassification. This includes a change to NSD-30, a request for special FOIA legislation, coordination with State to notify allies and others, etc!

A major issue has been the potential international and foreign policy impacts resulting from the US Government officially acknowledging an NRO and certain facts about it. You are more involved with foreign relations and exchanges of intelligence information and may have further insight with this area. Per our discussion, I need your help in analyzing any issues you feel are important which may include the following:

- a. Would NRO disclosure to the level described above be contrary to any government foreign disclosure policy? If so, what would have to be changed, and by whom?
- b. Could this disclosure possibly lead to foreign sanctions against the US, from denial of emergency landing rights for Space Shuttle missions to UN sanctions?
- c. Would NRO disclosure jeopardize favorable relations with foreign countries? This could include non-NRO agreements such as military bases, overflight privileges, intelligence-sharing relationships, and so forth.
- d. What level of NRO disclosure would exceed the threshold of pain for international tolerance?
- e. Would NRO disclosure raise any foreign policy issues such as sovereignty of space that have been dormant for many years?

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Approved for Release
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I have also attached letters between us and the CIA Counterintelligence Center in which we asked for an updated counterintelligence assessment of NRO declassification. I would appreciate a dialogue as soon as possible.

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- 1 - Excerpts from [REDACTED]
- 2 - SSCI Question-for-the-record
- 3 - Correspondence with CIC [REDACTED]

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