

PA-A-5

MEMORANDUM



April 25, 1967

General Berg
Colonel Worthman
Mr. Schadegg

For your information, the attached paper was prepared as background material for the DCI. It will not go to the USIB.

James Q. Reber

Attachment

TCS-0038-67 Subj: Decontrol
and Downgrading of Satellite
Photography.

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24 April 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Decontrol and Downgrading of
Satellite Photography

REFERENCES:

- a. USIB-D-41.12/25 (COMOR-D-7/56),
27 Mar 67
- b. USIB-D-41.12/26 (COMOR-D-7/57),
6 Apr 67
- c. USIB-D-41.12/22 (COMOR-D-7/49),
29 Jul 66

1. This memorandum summarizes the arguments in favor of and against downgrading satellite photography and releasing it from the TALENT Control System. It also summarizes the issues involved in these arguments and the probable effects of alternative plans by which the decontrol and downgrading might be accomplished.

2. The principal arguments in favor of downgrading satellite photography are as follows:

a. Recognize Reality. The Soviets are aware that we are conducting a satellite reconnaissance program and there has been widespread speculation in the public press concerning the results that we have achieved.

b. Improve Security. It is argued that some officials in the U.S. Government who have not been briefed on the U.S. reconnaissance program, but who are aware of the public speculation, may inadvertently comment on the U.S. satellite reconnaissance program in an improper manner; whereas if the existence of the program could be discussed at the SECRET level they could be made properly aware of its importance and the need for circumspection in referring to it.

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c. Improve Utility. It is argued that if the results of our satellite reconnaissance program were known at the SECRET level the U.S. position in disarmament and other negotiations would be improved and that it would be possible to apply the information to a wide range of problems of interest to the scientific community and to government agencies not directly involved in intelligence.

d. Forestall Duplication of Effort. It is argued that if the results of our satellite reconnaissance program were available at the SECRET level it would help to make unnecessary the plans currently advocated by NASA and other government departments for the creation of unclassified satellite photographic systems to be used in the solution of scientific problems.

e. Improve Confidence. If the results of our satellite reconnaissance program were available at the SECRET level it would improve the confidence of our customers in intelligence judgments generally.

3. The principal arguments advanced against decontrol and downgrading are as follows:

a. Reduce Current Security. Downgrading of satellite photography to SECRET would greatly increase the number of people who have access to the information and would increase the risk of leaks concerning the scope and results of the program. It might even result in such a flurry of leaks as to cause the Soviet Union to feel that it was forced to react publicly against our satellite reconnaissance program.

b. Reduce Future Security. It is argued that any relaxation of controls at this time would tend to make it more difficult to maintain a residual security in the future. Specifically, it is argued that the downgrading of KH-4 photography at this time would make it difficult for us to retain the results of KH-9 photography in a security compartment after the KH-4 is replaced by the KH-9.

c. Control. Under present control procedures the information contained in the TALENT Control System can be denied, released, or manipulated by the DCI and the USIB in such a way as to achieve specific conscious ends. If the information is released at the SECRET level no such centralized control will exist. Decisions concerning the purposes for which the material will be used will be made by thousands of officials throughout the U.S. Government.

d. Stimulate Enemy Countermeasures. It is argued that if the Soviet Union or others became aware of our successes, either through increased leaks or through easier penetration of U.S. intelligence organizations as a result of downgrading, those officials who were concerned with countering U.S. intelligence might be provided with support in their arguments to push countermeasures against our satellite reconnaissance program. These countermeasures might include political action, physical countermeasures, improved camouflage, or concealment of small objects.

e. Stimulate Enemy Developments. There is some possibility that if the Soviet Union or other nation with appropriate capabilities became aware of our successes, they might be stimulated or assisted to develop improved satellite reconnaissance capabilities to use against the U.S. and its allies.

f. No Real Need for Downgrading. It is argued that the TALENT Control System is sufficiently widespread and sanitization procedures sufficiently liberal to make it possible to use the results of our satellite reconnaissance program for all of the main purposes for which they are needed.

4. The various arguments for and against downgrading appear to focus on four main issues. These are:

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a. True Security. Whereas the security system was originally established to deny to the Soviets knowledge of the existence of a satellite reconnaissance program they are now aware that it exists. The questions are, therefore, what is it that we actually need to protect by security measures, and what security measures should be adopted that are appropriate to those ends? These are questions that might be answered differently by those who argue for and against downgrading. In my opinion we need to protect the following:

(1) The U.S. program still has a technical superiority over the Soviet satellite reconnaissance program. The advantage is primarily in large optics but also involves other operational factors. Both the existence and the nature of the technical advantage should be protected.

(2) We should avoid any relaxation of security which would inadvertently cause a confrontation with the Soviet Union or others on the issue of U.S. reconnaissance.

(3) We should continue to deny to the Soviet Union information concerning the scope and degree of success that our program has achieved in solving intelligence problems.

b. Control. Should the intelligence community continue to maintain control over the use and exploitation of satellite photography? The inhibiting effects of control should be weighed against the advantages of controlling the uses to which satellite photography is applied.

c. New Uses. Should KH photography be applied to new uses on a large scale? As a result of studies conducted during the past year or two, both inside and outside the intelligence community it is obvious satellite photography can be used for a wide number of uses for which it has not been

used in the past. Most of these uses relate to studies of various aspects of the earth and its environment. It is probably possible to develop procedures to apply satellite photography to many of these uses within the TALENT Control System but full use for these purposes can probably not be achieved unless the photography is downgraded to at least the SECRET level. In fact, it cannot be used for some purposes until it is completely declassified. The importance of these new uses cannot be fully determined at this time but should be kept under continuous study.

d. New Users. Should new users of satellite photography be encouraged in large numbers? As a consequence of the new uses for satellite photography that have become apparent a number of agencies of the U.S. Government are interested in using satellite photography. For example, we have just authorized the creation of a TALENT-KEYHOLE center in the U.S. Geological Survey. If all of the agencies that are interested in using satellite photography are accommodated it would be necessary to arrange additional expansions of the TALENT Control System or to downgrade the photography to make it accessible to government agencies who do not participate in the TALENT Control System.

5. Based on the fact that the charge on the Ad Hoc Group was to study the problems involved in decontrol and downgrading and not to make specific recommendations, the paper submitted to USIB set forth four alternative ways to decontrol and downgrade T-KH material. (The four alternatives are attached if you wish to go over them in detail.) In describing the alternatives it is recognized that each could be varied in a number of ways. A fifth alternative would be to maintain the status quo. This fifth alternative would not mean that all present TALENT control restrictions are set in concrete. To be realistic the system must be viable and I would expect many ad hoc changes can be made to meet specific situations as they arise.

6. The first three of the alternative plans call for the downgrading of KH photography itself in varying amounts. The fourth plan would retain the photography in its original format in the TALENT Control System but would permit the publication of PI reports and other reports based on them at the SECRET level. Such reports could contain specially prepared photographic illustrations which would not reveal technical details of the camera systems.

7. In my opinion the first three alternatives would jeopardize true security, eliminate intelligence community control over much satellite photography, and only partially satisfy the problems of new uses and new users. The fourth alternative would involve a minimum increase in risk to security and would retain control over the use of the photography itself. It would permit wider use of the information obtained from photography but would require that new uses and new users be incorporated into the TALENT Control System. All of the alternatives presented are broad statements of policy, not detailed plans. If any of the four are adopted, COMOR should be instructed to develop a detailed plan for the implementation of that alternative.

8. In spite of some obvious advantages in liberalizing control, the study conducted so far has not made a convincing case to show that the interests of the U.S. would suffer in any important way if the intelligence community continued to handle satellite photography within the T-KH system. There is a risk of overall duplication and inefficiency as well as some risk to security if NASA is allowed to develop unclassified satellite photographic systems duplicating capabilities of the NRP. On the other hand if the NASA program is developed in careful coordination with the NRP there should be a minimum of duplication and increase in security risk, and the existence of a NASA program could provide good cover for extensive sanitization of T-KH products. It would appear therefore that it would be unwise to rush into a downgrading program at this time because of the pressure generated by NASA's reconnaissance-oriented activities.

9. In summary, the status of satellite reconnaissance in the U.S. Government has changed considerably over the years,

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and many of the reasons for the establishment of current controls no longer exist in their original form. On the other hand, the arguments for decontrol and downgrading are enticing but not convincing. On balance, I recommend the following:

a. That the TALENT Control System continue to govern satellite photography and that COMOR be instructed to identify and propose to USIB solutions to specific problems involving the use of satellite photography and derived information outside of the TALENT Control System, especially those problems related to the use of T-KH material in support of military operations.

b. That COMOR be directed to provide an annex to the Sanitization Manual providing for the use of sanitized TALENT-KEYHOLE information, supported by illustrations, in current intelligence publications designed for high level audiences.

c. That COMOR report to USIB in six months as to how effective a and b have been in meeting problems and what further steps along the lines of alternative four should be considered if problems still exist.

William A. Tidwell

William A. Tidwell
SA(COMOR)DDS&T

Attachment:
Tab A

Copies 1 DCI
2 DDCI
3 Ex. Dir. - Compt.
4 USIB/S
5 ER
6 ADDI
7 C/CGS
8 D/S
9 DDS&T
10 SA/DDS&T
11 D/FMSAC
12-16 SA(COMOR)DDS&T