



NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
14675 Lee Road
Chantilly, VA 20151-1715

5 March 2020

Mr. John Greenewald, Jr.
27305 W. Live Oak Road, Suite #1203
Castaic, CA 91384

Dear Mr. Greenewald:

This is in response to your request dated and received on 27 August 2019 at the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO). Pursuant to Executive Order 13526, Section 3.6, you requested a Mandatory Declassification Review (MDR) of "*History of NRO Security Breaches.*"

The NRO has conducted review of the requested document pursuant to the mandatory declassification provisions of Executive Order 13526, and has determined that the material withheld is exempt from mandatory declassification under Section 3.5(c) of E.O. 13526.

You have the right to appeal this determination to the NRO Appellate Authority, 14675 Lee Road, Chantilly, VA 20151-1715, within 60 days of the above date. Please include an explanation of the reason(s) for your appeal as part of your submission.

If you have any questions, please call the Requester Service Center at (571)721-3100 and reference case number EOM-2019-00077.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Allman
Chief, Information Review and
Release Group

Enclosure:
1 Document

This document is made available through the declassification efforts
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File NRO Security Policy

BYE-5280-74

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7 January 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Robert Singel
Chairman, Ad Hoc Group Studying
Security of the NRO

SUBJECT: History of NRO Security Breaches

1. This memorandum responds to your request for a history of unauthorized disclosures related to the NRO.
2. There have been eight references to the NRO in the press.

(a) The first mention of the NRO to appear in the public domain was in the New York Times of 22 January 1971 in the fifth of a series of articles by Benjamin Helligs exploring the Nixon Administration's style in foreign policy. The article was titled "Foreign Policy: Disquiet Over Intelligence Setup." In a long article, Helligs credits the NRO as part of the Defense Intelligence Agency. The exact wording on the NRO is: "Its (DIA) National Reconnaissance Office spends another 1 billion dollars yearly flying reconnaissance airplanes and lofting or exploiting the satellites that constantly circle the earth and photograph enemy terrain with incredible accuracy from 130 miles up."

There was concern in the intelligence community over the entire article. The Office of Security, CIA conducted an investigation. The investigation developed that Mr. Helligs had visited Brigadier General Alexander Haig

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at the White House a few days before publication. General Haig reviewed the article in draft, made some factual changes and returned it to Welles. General Haig did not delete mention of the NRO. General Haig later mentioned the article and its forthcoming appearance to Mr. Frank Chapin, the Executive Secretary of the 40 Committee who alerted the Office of Security and the DCI. The DCI directed that no further action be taken by the Office of Security in connection with any part of Welles' article.

Reaction: There was no identifiable reaction by the Soviets. There was no follow up action by the U. S. mass news media to the mention of the NRO although other parts of the articles continue to plague us.

(b) The second reference to the NRO was made by Victor Marchetti in a series of radio and TV appearances during the period 21 September 1971 to April 1972. Marchetti refers to the National Reconnaissance Organization and correctly associates it as "... this is the group that's in charge of the satellites, the spies in the skies."

As you are aware, Marchetti was enjoined by the courts from publishing the book. The injunction was obtained based upon a breach of contract and was not associated with the issue of secrecy per se. Recently we have been engaged in attempting to enjoin Marchetti/Marks from publishing 725 classified items in their new manuscript, CIA and the Cult of Intelligence. The NRO is mentioned many times in this manuscript.

Reaction: There was no reaction by the press to Marchetti's mention of the National Reconnaissance Organization.

(c) The third use of material referring to the National Reconnaissance Office appeared

in the Christian Science Monitor, 23 April 1973 in an article titled: "New broom at CIA" by Benjamin Welles. In this article Welles discusses activities of Mr. James Schlesinger as head of the CIA. With reference to the "Intelligence Community Staff" Mr. Welles says: "On Schlesinger's order the ICS will comprise about 60--half CIA and the rest representing agencies involved in military intelligence--DIA, the code cracking National Security Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office, the State Department intelligence arm."

It is noted that Welles indicates that Mr. Schlesinger was the source of his information. In this connection Welles says: "in his first talks with newsmen, Mr. Schlesinger has promised to cut back on such costly--and dismally ineffective--CIA pseudo-secret activities as running 50,000 anti-Communists guerrillas in Laos."

While not directly pertinent to the subject of this paper, it is interesting to note that Welles says Mr. Schlesinger "forecasts a greater technological capability for the CIA." Welles then engages in a little speculative reporting. He says: "...presumably through new 'real time' spy satellites being developed that will transmit copious photographic and electronic data collected over the Soviet Union, China or other 'targets' instantaneously to U.S. earth stations for fast analysis. Currently most U.S. satellites spew forth data in packets which specially trained air crews recover in mid-air over the Pacific, then fly to Rochester for processing and Washington for analysis--a time consuming process."

The Director of Security was informed by the DCI that no investigation was to be made of this article by Mr. Welles.

(d) Fourth mention of the NRO was made in the Chicago Tribune, 27 April 1973, which carried a rewrite of the 23 April article by Welles in the Christian Science Monitor.

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Reaction: None.

(e) The fifth mention of the NRO occurred in the Congressional Record of October 12, 1973 when the National Reconnaissance Office was mentioned along with CIA, DIA and NSA.

Reaction: None.

(f) The sixth reference to the NRO occurred in the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report which reported on the activities of the Special Senate Committee to Study Questions related to Secret and Confidential Government documents. This Committee's report was the item in the Congressional Record of 12 October 1973.

Reaction: Mark Bedner, a reporter for the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report made several calls around the intelligence community in an unsuccessful attempt to develop more information. In a call to one possible source, Mr. Bedner remarked that the community's obvious attempts to conceal information about the NRO was more of a story than anything positive he could find about the NRO.

Reaction: None from the Soviets according to FBIS. However, the story stimulated the following stories in the press.

(g) The seventh mention in the press of the NRO was the Laurence Stern article in the Sunday, December 9, 1973 Washington Post titled: "\$1.5 Billion Secret in the Sky. U.S. Spy Unit Surfaces by Accident."

(h) This was replayed in large measure in the Olympian Olympia, Washington on December 12, 1973. The article was titled "Its Initials are NRO. Very Hush-Hush." This then is the eighth article in the press which has come to our attention.

Reaction: These two articles clearly place in the public domain creditable information about

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the NRO and there does not appear to be any sound method of excising these articles from what may be considered the reference material available to other reporters who wish to build upon it.

3. As of 6 January 1974, the FBIS was unable to locate any use of this American press material in Soviet publications or broadcast. However, FBIS informs that Soviet reaction is a little slow. They would not anticipate play back action until February or March 1974. This is not to be taken as indicative that the Soviets are not aware of the press material. We know they subscribe to all Congressional Records and major U.S. newspapers.

3.5(c)


Chief, Special Security Center