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Final Report: National Reconnaissance Program Task Force for the Director of Central Intelligence

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NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE PROGRAM TASK FORCE

Final Report: National Reconnaissance Program Task Force for the Director of Central Intelligence

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Contents

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Final Report:
National Reconnaissance Program Task Force for the Director of Central Intelligence

Introduction

You have asked us to review and make recommendations to you regarding the overall direction of the National Reconnaissance Program (NRP) in time to be useful for your deliberations on the US fiscal year 1994 budget and five-year program. (The Terms of Reference are in Appendix A under separate cover.) In the six weeks available to us, we have done our best to evaluate the total system architecture for overhead imagery intelligence (IMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), [redacted] and related communications as thoroughly as possible. We have outlined a strategy for overhead reconnaissance based on a reduced set of programs. Our assessment is that this reduced set will support the basic needs of the National Command Authorities (NCA), policy makers, and several sets of operational users, particularly including military commanders [redacted] Throughout, we have balanced the ways in which space-based and non-space-based collection could meet our intelligence needs, considering both effectiveness and economy of effort.

Much useful preparatory work had been completed, and more was under way as a result of other reviews that the National Security Council (NSC), you, and the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) have initiated. We have drawn substantially from these efforts and have been aided by a series of briefings and discussions with the key participants.

We have begun from an understanding that intelligence needs are changing substantially as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the momentous events of the last few years. The risk to the nation of failing to detect any single event will be less cataclysmic than would have been the case when our concern was focused on the USSR; most would agree that there is no single development today that would deserve the attention we once focused on potential Soviet strategic weapons breakthroughs. But this does not radically simplify the task of intelligence collection in general or of overhead collection in particular.

It does change the focus of overhead collection and the nature and use of some collection tools. As a result of these developments, some intelligence tasks are declining in importance, even nearly disappearing; examples are [redacted] Other tasks are declining because of technical developments unrelated to the Soviet collapse— [redacted] Therefore, some traditional collection tasks, for which we have heavily used overhead systems, will migrate to other methods of collection—for example [redacted]

We want to stress that the uncertain nature of the world that is emerging from the end of the Cold War puts a heavy premium on the flexibility of intelligence collection methods. Flexibility is vital in order for us to be able to deal with unexpected developments that can be taken as seriously hostile to our national interests in a range of ways. Proliferation of weapons [redacted] economic challenges, and other concerns are currently prominent. But the key point is that the focused and, in many cases, rather specific intelligence collection needs of the past (what's going on at [redacted] test range?) are being replaced by issues and concerns with less specific

addresses—in geography [redacted] We have thus been especially mindful of the importance of being able to focus upon different regions and on new sources of intelligence as unexpected needs arise. We must do this while still paying an appropriate degree of attention to [redacted]

Another general concern has been to ensure that intelligence collection be useful to a wide range of consumers, from the President to the commanders of small military units in the field. This must be available across the full spectrum from peace, through tension and crisis, to the use of military force. One important development in recent years has been the increasing value and use of collection from NRP systems in the support of military operations. [redacted]

Our intelligence collection assets also need to be capable of dealing with more than one crisis at a time. [redacted]

Throughout this review, we have felt acutely the need to be fiscally conservative in what we recommend. Yet the panel is of the view that, although it is unrealistic today to expect anything other than some decline in the resources devoted to intelligence collection, an excellent case can be made for that decline being substantially less than the decline in spending on national defense in general. The leverage that intelligence, properly disseminated and used, gives to the consumers of intelligence—especially as a force multiplier to the military—strongly suggests the increased utility of intelligence in the post-Cold War world. Although substantial reorientation is needed, it by no means suggests that there should be, overall, a proportional decline in intelligence resources. Quite the contrary.

We have tried to make recommendations, and we believe that we have succeeded, which will save intelligence collection resources compared with a program of proceeding with the NRP as most recently set out in the President's program. We have done so by recommending the excision of some collection tasks and even some entire types of existing and proposed collection systems. We believe that some of these tasks would be useful to perform and that these systems would also be useful; on balance, however, we believe these functions can be handled adequately in these new world circumstances with the alternate methods we recommend.

We would stress that the basic architecture we recommend, in our judgment, comprises the fewest number of both satellites and satellite types needed to respond adequately to the overhead collection component of the nation's intelligence needs for the foreseeable future.

Finally, we have devoted considerable attention to the industrial base for the NRP. In many ways, this industrial base is at the heart of a key aspect of this country's predominance in space—a predominance that we believe constitutes a unique strength for the nation. Further, predominance in space-based reconnaissance provides the United States with an extraordinary instrument in our relations with the rest of the world. We should strive to sustain this predominance in the actions we now take with respect to NRP investments. Although several other programs—such Air Force systems as MILSTAR, DSP (Defense Support Program), and others—also provide support for the industrial base, many of the technology and production techniques that have pushed the state of the art across a whole spectrum of unmanned space capabilities are generated by the

[redacted]

NRP. NASA's focus on manned space flight and one-time experimental programs in recent years has further moved the NRP front and center as far as the nation's industrial production base for unmanned space flight is concerned. A wise reduction in the NRP cannot be made without paying attention to this industrial base and to the critical functions that it must retain as it, too, shrinks. Our recommendations

[redacted]

Third, we have tried to consider the rest of the intelligence process downstream from collection. Although our principal focus has been on the NRP and hence on collection, we have done our best to consider the implications of inadequacies and required improvements in production and distribution of intelligence. To focus collection properly, it is clearly vital to consider the needs of the final users of intelligence, whether the President or a commander in the field, and to recommend directions in collection that can be most readily and usefully exploited.

[redacted]

Finally, we have studied, and our recommendations have been influenced by, the Intelligence Community's requirements process. But we have by no means simply taken the most recent outputs of that process and tried to recommend a way to satisfy all, or even some fixed share, of them. Much of the requirements process deals with operational requirements, or the tasking of existing collection systems. As such, these requirements indicate the proper direction for developing and acquiring future intelligence collection systems only very indirectly—to about the same extent that the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) indicates the proper direction for strategic force planning. Simple extrapolations from these current tasking requirements to future force requirements for a suite of collection systems is often not much more useful. It tends to produce a fiscally unmanageable wish list: a sky filled with satellites.

Consequently, we have sought to make judgments about the nature of future intelligence needs (a term we prefer to "requirements" to avoid the implication that we have become enmeshed in the process set out in the previous paragraph) based on our own assessments of a mixture of factors. We have begun with NSR-29, NSD-67, the *National Security Strategy of the United States: 1991-1992*, and your 10-year guidance. We have then tried, as best we could, to match those future needs with intelligence collection methods that may satisfy them, given all the uncertainties and vagaries described above.

We would not want to leave the impression that only difficulties and problems have dominated our deliberations. There are some exciting opportunities for using the remarkable assets developed and operated by the NRO to promote the goals and objectives of the United States in innovative and effective ways. We have thus made some suggestions about the extraordinary promise of the accelerating technological revolution in information processing and dissemination.

We have sought, in light of all these considerations, to make recommendations for the general direction of the NRP that would give us both the maximum return for the funds spent on intelligence collection within that program and the maximum leverage for us as a nation over those matters that affect our security.

Future Needs and Collection Methods

The intelligence apparatus exists to serve the national security interests of the United States. The most recent expression of this is the *National Security Strategy of the United States: 1991-1992*, as defined by the President. The challenge before us is to address directions in national security following the collapse of the USSR and world communism and the worldwide fallout from these developments. We realize that, more and more, the important dimensions of our national security will be set by economic and political factors in the future, as well as by military factors. In addition, it is clear that in the aftermath of the Cold War, the military factors themselves take on a considerably different cast. We also paid close attention to the intelligence needs associated with global issues such as the proliferation of weapons [redacted] and the environment. To assess the impact of all these concerns on intelligence needs, we reviewed and used the results of NSR-29. (The foundation upon which our approach is based is set out in more detail in Appendix B under separate cover.)

For purposes of this report, we grouped intelligence needs into three broad categories:

- Intelligence that provides indications and warning (I&W) of emerging threats to our security—both strategic and regional.
- Intelligence that supports policy makers in developing and executing plans and policies in several areas—economic, political, defense, and global issues.
- Intelligence that supports crisis management and the use of military force, nationally or in coalition arrangements.

[redacted]

After making our best assessment of the needs of the consumers of intelligence who deal with these national security matters, we have set forth our judgments about the future directions for overhead intelligence collection that stem from these needs. We are aware that some important types of intelligence are increasingly likely to come from sources other than overhead collection and that overhead systems are costly. We have also focused, however, on overhead collection's unique attributes.

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IMINT

[redacted]

[redacted]

formed the Industrial Advisory Commission, composed of four senior aerospace executives. The Commission solicited responses from that portion of the aerospace industry that serves the NRP and developed concepts for addressing industry's concerns. Their report to the panel is in Appendix C under separate cover.

[redacted]

Industrial Base Considerations

The future overhead collection architecture is heavily dependent on the capabilities of the US aerospace industry. The effects of reducing the industrial base must be considered in any recommendations the panel makes.

Even the current program would require a reduced industrial base in order for production to take place at efficient rates. A reduced program, such as we set out here, requires such reductions to an even greater degree. To ensure as comprehensive a look at the problem as time would allow, the panel

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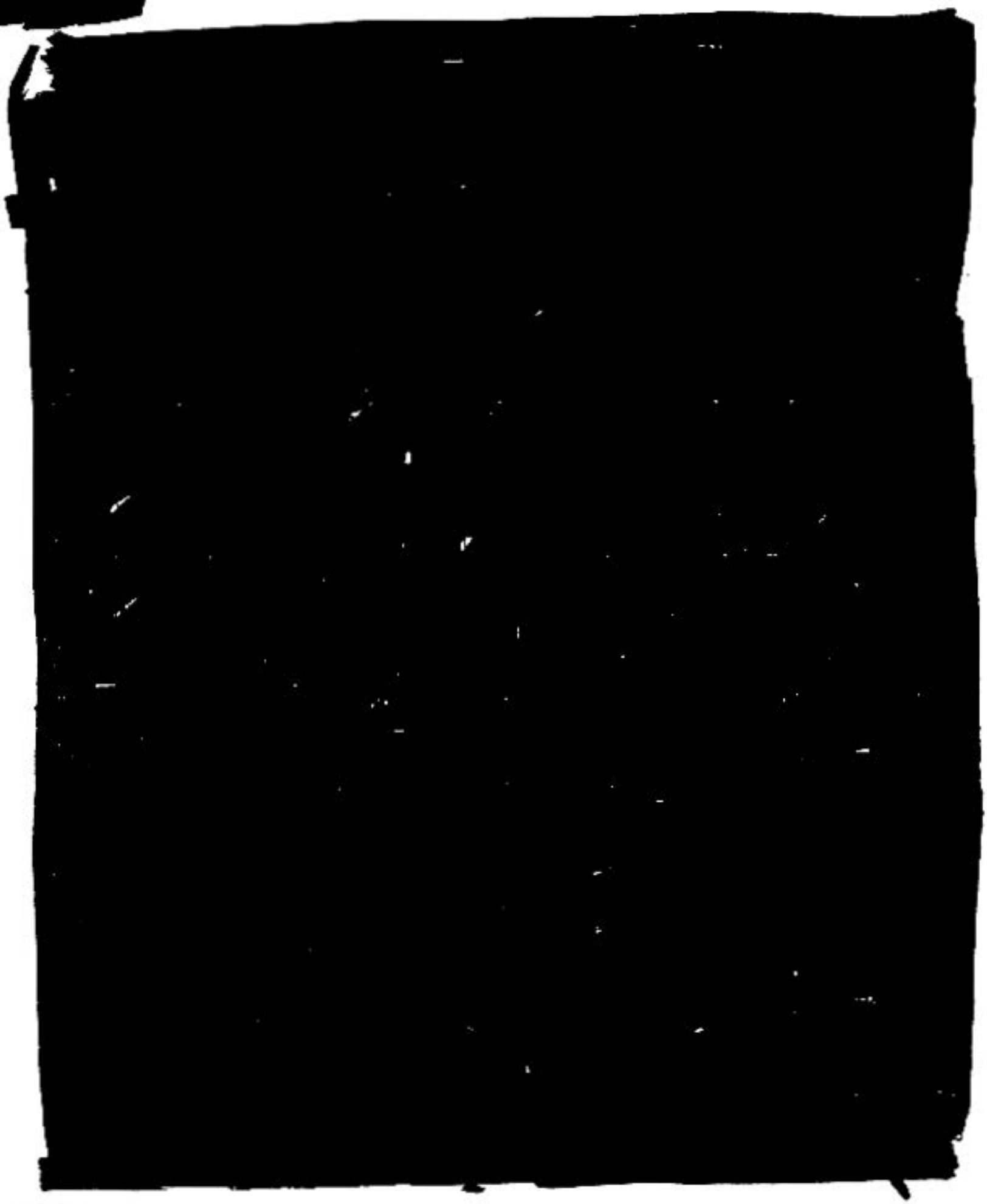

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We believe that sufficient oversight exists to ensure that the NRO is compliant with the relevant requirements of the Federal Acquisition Regulations.

Procurement Policy Considerations

The procurement procedures of the NRO continue to be among the most efficient processes in government today. Nevertheless, the panel recommends that these procedures be reviewed and further streamlined to reduce unnecessary work. Both industry and government incur substantial costs in preparing and evaluating competitive proposals. While it is appealing to have numerous qualified sources for each procurement, this results in replication of capabilities—a luxury we can ill afford in today's environment. A thorough review and simplification of the acquisition regulations could allow significant cost reduction. The percentage of program costs expended for documentation appears to have increased dramatically over the last 20 years. It is not clear that this has been accompanied by reduced risk, improved visibility, or enhanced efficiency.

Although further simplification is needed, we were impressed by the relatively streamlined management within the NRO compared with DoD procurement methods. The development of very sophisticated national collection systems is challenging enough without the additional overhead of bureaucracy outside of the NRO. We strongly urge that you and the Secretary of Defense help to ensure that the NRO continues to be protected from unnecessary and burdensome external bureaucratic controls. The NRO's cradle-to-grave development methodology and its acquisition management system are far more streamlined than those of the DoD; these allow the NRO to field systems faster and more effectively than is the case for most DoD systems.

International Industrial Issues

Thirty years of research, development, and application of space technology has given the United States preeminence in space-based reconnaissance systems. The establishment of this capability, while begun under the auspices of the government, has placed the United States and its aerospace firms in a unique position. The aerospace industry is now finding itself facing both reduced government spending and numerous inquiries from foreign governments for proposals for space-based surveillance systems. These countries, either through a lack of indigenous technology, motivation, or money are finding it attractive to approach US companies instead of undertaking their own long-term space system development.

The interest in space reconnaissance systems will grow as more countries are exposed to products from these systems or become aware of their value. We have seen extensive procurement of SPOT-type imagery by foreign governments. Over the next decade more countries will request overhead technology and systems or request that the United States share overhead intelligence with them.

[redacted]

[redacted]

The panel feels that you should take the lead in an interagency effort to construct a national strategy, [redacted] for dealing with requests for the sale of US space expertise or the sharing of overhead products.

[redacted]

Transition Considerations

We have recommended an architecture for the future of a consolidated NRP [redacted]

[redacted]

The planning for a transition from today's constellation is complex. With many factors to consider, we have only had time to undertake a summary review of this area. In our judgment, a balanced approach would be as follows:

[redacted]

Concluding Note

Our review of the NRP has allowed us to gain an understanding of the individual programs, the operations, and the people. Our discussions with a broad spectrum of the NRO's customers have permitted us to appreciate how each of these organizations use and depend on the NRO's products. It is clear to us that the intelligence gained from overhead reconnaissance has a vital place in the country's national security, and that it is being obtained with remarkable technology and by talented people. Although we see some shifts in priority, we believe that, in general, space reconnaissance will continue to make a unique contribution to the country's intelligence needs for the foreseeable future.

We took a long-term view of the program. Our approach was to design a program to meet the needs of the country in the next decade and beyond, while attempting to balance the substantial and unavoidable uncertainties. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

In summary, the NRO continues to deliver innovative solutions to this country's national security problems. We are convinced that the program recommended by this panel, if implemented, will provide a capable and flexible way to meet the challenges of the early 21st century.

[redacted]