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MEMORANDUM FOR DR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI

DR. FRANK PRESS

THE WHITE HOUSE

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CDA
F-WS

Subject: Reactions to President's Acknowledgment of the Fact of Satellite Photoreconnaissance

The following is a summary of reactions to the President's announcement contained in his October 1 speech on space policy.

Congressional

Beginning on September 27, State Department/Congressional Relations contacted the following congressional offices about the decision to declassify and acknowledge "fact of" in the President's October 1 speech: Bayh, Byrd, Church, Clark, Cranston, Culver, Glenn, Hamilton, Hart, Kennedy, Mathias, Pell, Proxmire, Stennis, and Zablocki.

The general reaction was that this announcement would be a bit of a non-event, but they were glad the Administration was finally officially acknowledging what had been an "open secret" for some time. They did recognize that this would make the Administration's job easier in explaining verification of SALT. There were no negative responses on the Hill during the consultations nor following the President's speech.

US Public Reactions

Verification is probably the paramount public concern about SALT. We must be able to deal with this issue in a concrete and easily understood fashion if we are to avoid the untenable position of saying "trust us."

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DECLASSIFICATION OF THE FACT OF RECEIVING PHOTO
 RECONNAISSANCE DATA HAS THROUGH THE UNFOLDED US VIEW
 OF STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS HAVE HAD ABOUT 40 SPEAK-
 ING ENGAGEMENTS SINCE THE FACT OF PHOTORECONNAISSANCE
 SATELLITES WAS DECLASSIFIED. THIS PRELIMINARY EXPERI-
 ENCE INDICATES THAT DECLASSIFICATION OF THE "FACT OF"
 HAS INCREASED PUBLIC CONFIDENCE BUT HAS NOT COMPLETELY
 RELIEVED PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT VERIFICATION OF A SALT
 TWO AGREEMENT. SPEAKERS HAVE TRIED TO DIRECT THE
 DISCUSSION TO BROADER ASPECTS OF VERIFICATION
 (PRINCIPLES, ELEMENTS OF THE TREATY WHICH ENHANCE
 VERIFICATION, ETC.) BUT THE PUBLIC CONTINUES TO SHOW
 SKEPTICISM AND A FASCINATION WITH "HARDWARE."
 AS THE DEBATES ABOUT SALT RATIFICATION PROCEED
 AND WE GET A BETTER FEEL FOR THE PRECISE NATURE OF THE
 PUBLIC'S CONCERNS, WE WILL BETTER BE ABLE TO JUDGE
 WHETHER ANY ADDITIONAL STEPS MAY BE NECESSARY OR DESIR-
 ABLE. IN THE END, SOME DISCUSSION OF SATELLITE PHOTO-
 RECONNAISSANCE BEYOND "FACT OF" MAY BE REQUIRED TO
 OVERCOME PUBLIC CYNICISM. AN INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE
 CHAIRED BY THE DCI IS EXAMINING THE SPECIFIC ISSUE OF
 A SELECTIVE AND PHASED RELEASE OF PHOTORECONNAISSANCE
 IMAGERY. AN OPTIONS PAPER IS DUE TO THE PRC (SPACE) BY
 FEBRUARY 15, 1979.

Soviets

AS FAR AS THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC REACTION TO
 THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE GOODBY INFORMED
 SOVIET MINISTER VASEV ON SEPTEMBER 29. VASEV, SPEAKING
 PERSONALLY, SAID THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD NOT HAVE
 ANY PROBLEM WITH THE PRESIDENT'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND
 NOTED THAT PHOTORECONNAISSANCE SATELLITES WERE THE
 "BACKBONE" OF BOTH SIDES' VERIFICATION CAPABILITIES.
 HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT OFFICIAL US ACKNOWLEDGMENT
 COULD TOUCH ON THE SENSITIVITIES OF THIRD COUNTRIES
 AND THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE SOME PROBLEMS. HE OBSERVED
 THAT PHOTORECONNAISSANCE SATELLITES HAD NEVER BEEN
 OFFICIALLY ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE SOVIET UNION. VASEV
 EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN THAT DECLASSIFICATION COULD
 HAVE RAMIFICATIONS FOR A NUMBER OF ISSUES SUCH AS
 THOSE BEING DEALT WITH IN THE UN OUTER SPACE COMMITTEE.
 THERE HAS BEEN NO FURTHER SOVIET DIPLOMATIC
 RESPONSE SINCE THE SEPTEMBER 29 GOODBY-VASEV MEETING.

Allies

AMBASSADOR BENNETT INFORMED THE NATO ALLIES AT
 THE SEPTEMBER 27 NAC. THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS RECEIVED
 WITHOUT REACTION OR COMMENT.

The French DCM to NATO was informed privately that declassification of the fact of satellite photo-reconnaissance does not change the unfavorable US view of the French proposal for an international verification agency. The French DCM expressed disappointment.

Except for Australia, the other allies who were informed made no comment or reaction. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs requested additional information, including the text of the President's speech, to ensure that they could fully brief government ministers.

Special Australian interest is due in part to the Government's need to be able publicly to explain and defend US defense policies and practices that may involve Australia. It also reflects the aftermath of a recent episode in which the Minister of Defense was uninformed about an aspect of our relationship when queried by the Opposition in Parliament.

The Australian actions primarily were precautionary. Department of Foreign Affairs officials predicted no particular problems and none have arisen as a result of the President's speech.

United Nations

Thus far, there has been no delegate reaction to the President's announcement. It is likely, however, that interested governments still are considering what public position they should take. They may express their interests and possible concerns as early as October 16 when the UN Special Political Committee addresses outer space issues. Work is underway to formulate a US presentation.

We also are likely to encounter related issues in the weeks and months ahead:

French proposal. The USG has been trying to dissuade France from tabling a proposal at the UNGA calling for the creation of international satellite verification. Now that the US has publicly acknowledged the role of satellites in verifying compliance with arms control agreements, we will face the task of making a persuasive public case for opposing international verification if the French go ahead with their plan.

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Accusations of "Espying." There may be an effort in the UN to condemn as espionage or a violation of international law either (a) all satellite photo-reconnaissance undertaken without the permission of the sensed State or, more likely, (b) all such reconnaissance except in the context of verification of arms control agreements or with the sensed State's prior approval. If such charges are made or a resolution along these lines is proposed, our response will be to reiterate the need for satellite verification of arms control agreements and to stress that no principle of international law prohibits remote sensing of the earth from outer space.

UN Outer Space Committee (OSC). If the issue of "fact of" is raised in the OSC, we will distinguish between remote sensing of the earth and its national environment and photoreconnaissance for arms control verification, and will try to get the latter issue referred to other UN forums.

Certain of our positions on principles relating to remote sensing, including our stance on a long-standing Soviet proposal on resolution limits for open dissemination, will need to be reassessed in time for the meetings of the Legal Subcommittee and the Scientific Subcommittee which begin in February. That review will begin soon.

Foreign Media Reaction

A review of FBIS reports indicates that the President's acknowledgment of satellite photoreconnaissance was reported in a wide variety of countries, but was not covered extensively. A few stories were supportive, most were simply brief news reports, and some were critical. No pattern of reactions is apparent: the story was covered by the East European press in about the same way as the Western European and Third World press. The President's acknowledgment apparently was not covered by Soviet media. There is no evidence of continuing foreign media interest.

The content of most of the stories appeared to be drawn from Jody Powell's background which drew attention to the fact that this was the first time that the US had officially acknowledged satellite photoreconnaissance. Many stories noted that this simply was official confirmation of what was already well known.

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The tone of most of the stories was "matter-of-fact-reporting." The number of explicit commentaries and editorials was negligible. On the other hand, the overwhelming proportion of reports referred to "spy" satellites, several referred to "espionage," and some characterized the President as "admitting" or "confessing" the fact of satellite photoreconnaissance. A large number of stories simply reported that the US had officially admitted that it uses satellites to "spy on the Soviet Union and other countries" and failed to make the connection to SALT and arms control verification.

Notwithstanding these apparent pejoratives, there was little explicit criticism. This may simply reflect a cynical resignation about the conduct of great powers. The context, however, suggests that in many cases, reporters simply used "spy" as a synonym for "reconnaissance." To some extent, use of these terms also may be artifacts of translating the President's speech into the native language and then translating the resulting foreign language reports back into English.

No ICA posts have reported significant local media reaction nor have defense attaches detected major media attention to the announcement. The Bureau of Intelligence and Research has not received any reactions or responses through its channels.

Peter Tarnoff
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Executive Secretary