



Office of the Director

~~TOP SECRET//SI//TK//NOFORN~~
NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
14675 Lee Road
Chantilly, VA 20151-1715

28 April 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: ~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Declassification of GAMBIT and
HEXAGON Imaging Systems and
Selected Programmatic Data

REFERENCE: ~~(S//NF)~~ NIMA Memorandum for the Director of Central
Intelligence, S/NF-110-00/NP, 17 April 2000,
Declassification of KH-7 and KH-9 Mapping
(Frame Camera) Imagery

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Action Requested: I request that you
concur with my intent to declassify the "fact of" the GAMBIT (KH-7
and KH-8) and HEXAGON (KH-9) family of imaging systems and
selected programmatic data. This request does not include or
imply declassification of any GAMBIT or HEXAGON imagery, which is
under the functional management authority of the Director,
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA).

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Background: GAMBIT (KH-7 and KH-8
systems) and HEXAGON (KH-9, including the mapping camera system
and the dual panoramic cameras) were Cold War-era, film-return,
satellite reconnaissance systems. GAMBIT operated between 1963
and 1984; HEXAGON operated between 1971 and 1984. The National
Reconnaissance Office (NRO) developed these systems during the
Cold War as follow-on to the CORONA, ARGON, and LANYARD satellite
reconnaissance systems. Programmatic data and imagery from those
three earlier systems were declassified in 1995.

~~(S//NF)~~ In response to the referenced 17 April 2000
memorandum from the Director of the National Imagery and Mapping
Agency (NIMA, now NGA) to the Director of Central Intelligence
(DCI) on 25 October 2000, DCI Tenet approved partial
declassification of GAMBIT, including the KH-7 camera description
and most of its imagery; and HEXAGON, including the KH-9 mapping
camera description and most of its imagery. Remaining classified
were the program names GAMBIT and HEXAGON, along with details on
the cameras, other program information, and imagery from KH-8 and
from the KH-9 panoramic cameras.

DECL ON: 25X1, 20600325, RRG dated July 2005
DRV FROM: NCG 6.0, 21 May 2005

~~TOP SECRET//SI//TK//NOFORN~~

NRO APPROVED FOR RELEASE
13 August 2012

~~TOP SECRET//SI//TK//NOFORN~~

SUBJECT: ~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Declassification of GAMBIT and
HEXAGON Imaging Systems and
Selected Programmatic Data

(U) On 20 September 2002, the declassified KH-7 and KH-9 film records were formally transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration.

(U) The NRO has completed the attached detailed Policy Decision Risk Assessment (PDRA), an independent analytic assessment of the risks associated with declassification. Based upon past declassifications and the PDRA, I believe we can declassify considerably more details of those programs providing we implement declassification in a phased manner to mitigate any potential risks and thereby prevent the inadvertent disclosure of sensitive data that must remain classified. Moreover, a phased approach would enable the Director of National Intelligence and the Director, NRO to consult with mission partners and allies as part of the implementation.

~~(S//TK//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ My intent is to declassify the majority of programmatic data from these two programs. However, some sensitive operational data such as b1, b3 (50 USC 403-1)

b1, b3 (50 USC 403-1)

b1, b3 (50 USC 403-1)

information will remain classified to protect current and future NRO operations and sources and methods. We are currently preparing a detailed programmatic declassification guide which will specify the information to be released and the information designated for continued classification. I would emphasize that we will release information in carefully planned increments and only after a thorough review has been conducted.

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ The declassification of GAMBIT and HEXAGON programmatic data would be fully consistent with the President's Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies; subject: Classified Information and Controlled Unclassified Information from the Office of the Press Secretary, White House, 27 May 2009. Declassification would also support the President's goal of transparency. Publicly acknowledging the success of these programs would highlight the Nation's space and intelligence accomplishments, illustrate the remarkable service the programs provided and the value of National reconnaissance to the Nation's security. Declassification of these programs and recognition of those pioneers who built these marvelous systems would also be good for morale within the Intelligence Community. Indeed, I anticipate this declassification to be a major part of the NRO's 50th Anniversary celebration.

~~TOP SECRET//SI//TK//NOFORN~~

NRO APPROVED FOR RELEASE
13 August 2012

~~TOP SECRET//SI//TK//NOFORN~~

SUBJECT: ~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Declassification of GAMBIT and
HEXAGON Imaging Systems and
Selected Programmatic Data

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Recommendation: With your concurrence,
in addition to data declassified in October 2000, I will
declassify the program names GAMBIT and HEXAGON, the KH-8 and the
KH-9 panoramic camera imaging systems, and selected programmatic
data, and will treat program documents from the two programs
accordingly.

Very respectfully


Bruce Carlson

Attachment:

(U) NRO Policy Decision Risk
Assessment, dtd 19 Feb 10

~~(TS//SI//TK//NOFORN)~~

cc:

Under Secretary of Defense for
Intelligence
Director, Central Intelligence
Agency
Director, National Geospatial-
Intelligence Agency

CONCUR:

Dennis C. Blair,
Director of National Intelligence

Date

~~TOP SECRET//SI//TK//NOFORN~~