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14675 Lee Road
Chantilly, VA 20151-1715

Office of the Director

13 August 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: (U//~~FOUO~~) Declassification of GAMBIT and HEXAGON
Program Names

REFERENCE: a. (U) Acting DNI Memorandum, dated 27 July 2010,
same subject
b. (U) DNI Memorandum, dated 26 May 2010,
Executive Order 12951, Release of Imagery
Acquired From Space-Based National
Intelligence Reconnaissance Systems

(U//~~FOUO~~) First of all, I very much appreciate then Acting Director Gompert's concurrence, as set forth in Reference a, in my decision to declassify the program names GAMBIT and HEXAGON and certain related mission data. Because of his action, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) will be able to make the GAMBIT and HEXAGON programs central parts of our 50th Anniversary, allowing all Americans insight into some of the NRO's greatest achievements in space. Again, thank you to the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) staff for its assistance in this matter.

(U//~~FOUO~~) Certain language within Reference a, however, concerns me, and I would like your clarification of that language. More specifically, I am concerned about the last sentence of the fourth paragraph of Reference a, which states as follows:

"To ensure consistency, the DNI will continue to make the final declassification decision [of programmatic data related to these systems], based upon your inputs and your recommendations."

(U//~~FOUO~~) I certainly agree that a phased declassification approach is prudent. We will follow that approach in close coordination with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and with any affected agencies in the Intelligence Community (IC). Unfortunately, however, the above language seems to vest final declassification decisions in the ODNI and intrudes on the declassification authorities of an Agency Head.

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(U//~~FOUO~~) As an Agency Head and original Top Secret classification authority, the DNRO is empowered, under Executive Order (E.O.) 13526, section 3.1, to declassify any and all NRO information that he believes is no longer entitled to protection, regardless of when the information was first classified.

(U//~~FOUO~~) I decided to declassify the GAMBIT and HEXAGON program names and then to proceed with a phased declassification approach for the programmatic data. Because this action would inevitably receive wide publicity through the NRO 50th Anniversary celebrations, I wanted to ensure that the DNI and staff were informed of my decision. But I did not anticipate that the ODNI staff would want to make declassification decisions for every piece of programmatic data, as set forth in Reference a. In my opinion, those decisions are reserved for the Agency Head who is most familiar with his programs' details and the effects of disclosure.

(U//~~FOUO~~) I understand that section E.O. 13526, section 3.1, independently allows the DNI to downgrade or declassify information relating to intelligence sources or methods, presumably when the originating agency balks or objects. But in this instance, I initiated the action to declassify the program names because of my belief that disclosure served the public interest under section 3.1. I would respectfully suggest that the NRO is better suited than the ODNI staff to determine the proper classification status of GAMBIT and HEXAGON programmatic details, which are exclusively independent of the acquired imagery and intelligence products, but uniquely integrated with NRO operations.

(U//~~FOUO~~) In a separate effort, the NRO is working very closely with National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) on the declassification of historical imagery pursuant to E.O. 12951; the declassification authority in this case rests with the Director, NGA.

(U//~~FOUO~~) The declassification of the GAMBIT and HEXAGON programs will, however, greatly facilitate NGA's historical imagery declassification efforts. Therefore, unless you instruct me otherwise, I will make the declassification decisions on these details after coordinating closely with the IC agencies and the ODNI. This would be fully consistent with then DNI Blair's direction in Reference b, where he said: "This review will not address declassification of the space-based systems themselves or of associated technical or programmatic characteristics. Those declassification decisions rest with

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DNRO, as the Original Classification Authority, in coordination
with the DNI as appropriate."

~~_____
Bruce Carlson~~

CONCUR:

James R. Clapper, Jr.
Director of National Intelligence

Date

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