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Office of the Secretary of Defense 5 U.S.C. § 552
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS
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Reason: 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6)
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M&NS

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Policy on Release of Data from Geodynamics Experimental Ocean Satellite 3 (GEOS-3)

The Chairman of the National Security Council Under Secretaries Committee forwarded on May 10, 1975 a memorandum on this subject which provides policy options for your consideration.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's GEOS-3 satellite is currently providing high quality radar altimetry data some of which have direct military value to the Department of Defense and potentially to the Soviet Union. Geophysical information derived from this altimetry data can significantly improve the accuracy of future inertially guided GLBM systems.

Anticipating the military significance of GEOS-3 altimetry data acquired over certain ocean areas, NASA and DoD developed a data screening and distribution plan. It provides a very practical method for meeting civil scientific needs for geophysical data while protecting national security interests. Both sides made substantial compromises to accommodate the vital interests of the other in the balanced and conservative plan which resulted. Data from GEOS-3 is now being handled in accordance with this plan.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and I are quite concerned that you might void the currently operative and carefully developed DoD/NASA agreement. We consider the GEOS-3 data release issue to be precedent setting. Future civil earth observation satellites will carry an array of new sensors with ever-increasing information capacity and resolution. Much of the information from these advanced sensors will inevitably pose national security problems. Therefore, practical means, such as we have already developed for GEOS-3, for screening the collection and dissemination of all civil earth observation data will be necessary. The current arrangement should be left standing as a test of this method of handling these increasingly more difficult future problems.

We believe the generalized concerns, expressed by those opposed to these security measures who feel that NASA's international credibility may be impaired and a cloud cast over her future cooperative activities, are not warranted and should not override our very real national security concerns. We request that you sustain the NASA and Department of Defense agreement.

5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6)

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