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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

September 20, 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski
FROM: Warren Christopher, Acting *W.C.*
SUBJECT: Declassifying the Fact of Satellite
Photo Reconnaissance

Since neither Cy nor I will be able to attend the September 20 PRC meeting at which this issue will be considered, we want to reiterate our support for promptly declassifying the "fact of."

Declassifying the "fact of" now will help us to build support for SALT TWO ratification by enabling us to explain to the man in the street that our confidence in SALT compliance comes from satellite pictures, not our trust in the Soviets. This move, of course, won't have much impact on the Hill or on politically sophisticated observers because they already know about satellites. But it would help our case with the general population who, the polls show, want SALT but worry about Soviet cheating, and who don't know about satellite photo reconnaissance.

The euphemism "national technical means" doesn't fill the bill. It sounds evasive and suggests to some that the Administration is trying to cover up a weakness in its case for SALT. Declassifying the fact that satellite photo reconnaissance is used to verify SALT and other arms control agreements would enable government spokesmen to respond directly to the public's concerns without having to breach security regulations.

Whatever risks may be involved in declassifying the "fact of," are manageable. If we draw a clear line

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- 2 -

between declassifying "fact of" and the continuing classification of all other presently classified aspects of our satellite programs, we are confident that our officials will appreciate and abide by the new ground rules.

Release of satellite pictures, on the other hand, could pose some dangers without winning much additional public support for SALT. We don't think that this issue is ready for decision now and we would urge that we maintain our policy against release of satellite imagery.

We will want to prepare the ground before we acknowledge the fact of satellite photo reconnaissance in our public statements on SALT. In particular, we will want to inform the Soviets about our intentions and purpose, and warn them against any reaction that would damage our shared interests in SALT. They understand this and we don't expect any problems. Whatever preparations and consultations may be needed shouldn't take more than a few weeks.

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