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National Reconnaissance Office

Mission Ground Station Declassification

"Questions and Answers"

Question 1:

(U) Why has the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) decided now to acknowledge locations of mission ground stations?

Answer 1:

(U) Mr. Scott Large, NRO Director, in consultation with the DNI, made the decision to declassify the locations of our mission ground stations as a strategic move in keeping with our need to provide on-demand surveillance for real-time engagement by policy and military decision makers. The intent is to ensure that the NRO can fully support the new technical and policy initiatives developed across the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Intelligence Community (IC).

(U) The NRO has taken great strides this year to transform the organization so that it is best aligned to improve acquisitions and deliver improved intelligence data access, content, and timeliness.

Question 2:

(U) What is Being Declassified?

Answer 2:

~~(S//REL)~~ Acknowledgement of NRO domestic Mission Ground Stations (MGSs) and overseas NRO presence begins on 15 October 2008.

~~(S//TK//REL)~~ What has been declassified is the "fact of" the NRO operating MGSs at the following locations:

a. Aerospace Data Facility (ADF)--Colorado (ADF-C), located on Buckley Air Force Base, Colorado

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b. ADF-East (ADF-E), located on Fort Belvoir, Virginia

c. ADF-Southwest (ADF-SW), located at White Sands, New Mexico

~~(S//TK//REL)~~ Also declassified is the "fact of" the NRO having a presence at:

a. Joint Defense Facility Pine Gap (JDFPG), Australia

b. RAF Menwith Hill (RAFMH), United Kingdom

Question 3:

~~(S//TK//REL)~~ What do you do at this (ADF) site?

Answer 3:

~~(S//TK//REL)~~ This is an NRO Mission Ground Station. Each Aerospace Data Facility -- (ADF) Colorado, East, Southwest (C, E, SW) -- is a multi-mission ground station responsible for supporting worldwide defense operations and multi-agency collection, analysis, reporting, and dissemination of intelligence information. All three ADFs are responsible for command and control of reconnaissance satellites. They provide data to defense, intelligence and civil agencies supporting the U.S. Government and its Allies. For example, this will remove obstacles that could interfere with completely integrating the NRO MGSs with IC or DoD efforts such as the Global Information Grid (GIG), as well as ensuring that the experts at the MGSs can be fully effective participants with the rest of the IC in developing and implementing horizontal integration projects.

~~(S//TK//REL)~~ The NRO supports the joint missions at JDFPG and RAFMH through the provision of technical systems and shared research and development. The NRO's participation is achieved with the consent of the Host governments and contributes to the national security of the countries involved.

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Question 4:

(U) What Facts Are Remaining Classified?

Answer 4:

(U) All other "facts about" remain classified. Although the existence and location of the site is now unclassified, the operations and the data continue to be protected under the appropriate classification levels and controls.

Question 5:

(U) Can Anyone Visit These Sites Now?

Answer 5:

(U) All security measures remain the same. Only those individuals with the proper security clearance and need-to-know, visit the sites.

Question 6:

(U) Will This Action Pose Greater Risk?

Answer 6:

(U) The safety of MGS personnel and facilities is always a top priority. Therefore, short and long-term threat evaluation and appropriate protection measures will continue to be part of our daily operations and planning. Safety was studied in detail as part of the decision process. Close coordination with local and federal law enforcement authorities will continue.

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General Population
"Questions and Answers" (Q&As)

Q1: (U) Why has the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) decided now to acknowledge locations of mission ground stations?

A1. (U) Mr. Scott Large, NRO Director, in consultation with the DNI, made the decision to declassify the locations of our mission ground stations as a strategic move in keeping with our need to provide on-demand surveillance for real-time engagement by policy and military decision makers. The NRO has taken great strides this year to transform the organization so that it is best aligned to improve acquisitions and deliver improved intelligence data content, access, and timelines. These improvements are responsive to the objectives of both the Secretary of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence.

Q2: (U) What is Being Declassified?

A2: ~~(S//REL)~~ Acknowledgement of NRO domestic Mission Ground Stations (MGSs) and overseas presence begins on 15 Oct 2008.

~~(S//TK//REL)~~ What has been declassified is the "fact of" the NRO operating MGSs at the following locations:

- Aerospace Data Facility (ADF)-Colorado (ADF-C), located on Buckley AFB, CO
- ADF-East (ADF-E), located on Fort Belvoir, VA
- ADF-Southwest (ADF-SW), located at White Sands, NM

~~(S//TK//REL)~~ Also declassified is the "fact of" the NRO having a presence at:

- Joint Defense Facility Pine Gap (JDFPG), Australia
- RAF Menwith Hill (RAFMH), United Kingdom

Q3: (U) What Facts Are Remaining Classified?

A3: (U) All other "facts about" remain classified:

- (U) Operations information
- (U) Mission capabilities
- (U) Satellite tasking and targeting
- (U) Vulnerabilities
- (U) Legacy documents
- (U) History of NRO MGS missions and facilities
- (U) Locations of classified NRO sites

(U) Please refer to the NRO MGS Declassification Guide for additional guidance.

Q4: (U) Why Has it Been Declassified?

A4: (U) This is a strategic move. The intent is to ensure that the NRO can fully support the new technical and policy initiatives developed across the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Intelligence Community (IC).

Q5: (U) Can Anyone Visit These Sites Now?

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A5: (U) All security measures remain the same. Only those individuals with the proper security clearance, need-to-know, and access may enter the sites.

(U) Even though the existence and location of the site is now unclassified, the operations and the data continue to be protected under the appropriate classification levels and controls.

Q6: (U) How Does This Impact Me?

A6: (U) You must know the limits of what you can say at the unclassified level. Facts about MGSs remain classified.

(U) You will need to ensure that all new and reissued documents contain the correct classification.

(U) Please contact your Security Officer for additional guidance.

Q7: (U) Will This Action Pose Greater Risk?

A7: (U) The safety of MGS personnel and facilities is always a top priority. Therefore, short and long term threat evaluation and appropriate protection measures will continue to be part of our daily operations and planning. Safety was studied in detail as part of the decision process. Close coordination with local and federal law enforcement authorities will continue.

Q8. ~~(S//TK//REL)~~ What do you do at this (ADF) site?

A8. ~~(S//TK//REL)~~ This is an NRO Mission Ground Station. The Aerospace Data Facility (ADF) Colorado, East, Southwest (C, E, SW) is a multi-mission ground station responsible for supporting worldwide defense operations and multi-agency collection, analysis, reporting, and dissemination of intelligence information. It provides data to defense, intelligence and civil agencies supporting the U.S. Government and its Allies. For example, this will remove any obstacles that could interfere with completely integrating the NRO MGSs with IC or DoD efforts such as the Global Information Grid (GIG), as well as ensuring that the experts at the MGSs can be fully effective participants with the rest of the IC in developing and implementing horizontal integration projects.

Q9: (U) Can I Talk About What Happens At These Sites?

A9: (U) No. You may not discuss the plans, status, operations, and details of our satellites or our work.

(U//~~FOUO~~) Don't discuss classified information such as:

- Intelligence information/data
- Specific details of partnerships with foreign entities
- Operations
- History of NRO MGS missions and facilities
- Specifics of MGS staffing
- Budget, costs, or expenditures

Q10. (U) Where are your other mission ground stations?

A10:

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- ~~(S//TK//REL)~~ Aerospace Data Facility (ADF) Southwest, White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico
- ~~(S//TK//REL)~~ Aerospace Data Facility Colorado, Buckley Air Force Base, Colorado
- ~~(S//TK//REL)~~ Aerospace Data Facility East, Fort Belvoir, Virginia

(U) We also have a presence at:

- ~~(S//TK//REL)~~ Joint Defense Facility Pine Gap, Australia
- ~~(S//TK//REL)~~ RAF Menwith Hill, United Kingdom

((U) Reminder to NRO personnel: No other NRO facilities are being declassified.)

Q11: (U) What About Other Organizations/Agencies At These Sites?

A11: (U//~~FOUO~~) Since some partnerships will be unclassified and others will remain classified, do not discuss any partnerships when approached by individuals outside your organization.

(U) For further information about partnerships at your site, please contact your Security Officer.

Q12: (U) What Should I Say If I Am Contacted By The Media?

A12: (U) Please refer questions to the local communication POC and the NRO Office of Strategic Communications who are the only individuals authorized to respond to media inquiries.

Q13: (U) Can I Provide Greater Detail in My Resume Now?

A13:(U) All resumes will continue to be reviewed by your Security Officer, who will assist in determining proper content.

Q14: ~~(S//TK//REL)~~ What is the new Aerospace Data Facility Mission Statement?

A14: ~~(S//TK//REL)~~ The Aerospace Data Facility (C, E, SW) is a multi-mission ground station responsible for supporting worldwide defense operations and multi-agency collection, analysis, reporting, and dissemination of intelligence information. It provides data to defense, intelligence and civil agencies supporting the U.S. Government and its Allies.

Q15: ~~(S//TK//REL)~~ What can I say about why the NRO has a presence at RAF Menwith Hill and Joint Defense Facility Pine Gap?

A15: (U) The NRO cooperates with our allies on matters of mutual interest dealing with national security.

Q16: (U) How Will This Impact Personal Cover?

A16 (U//~~FOUO~~) ^{(b)(3)} ~~(b)(3)~~

^{(b)(3)} ~~(b)(3)~~

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Q17: (U) How Will This Impact Contracts?

A17: (U) Contractors will be notified by the NRO Contracting Office how they are impacted. Please contact your Contracting and Security Officers for additional guidance.

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Office of the Director

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NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

23 May 2007



Dear [REDACTED]

~~(S//TK//REL)~~ I appreciate the thoughtful consideration of your predecessor, [REDACTED], regarding our initiative to declassify the "fact of" [REDACTED] National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) mission ground stations and the "fact of" an NRO presence at the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap, Alice Springs, Australia, and Menwith Hill Station, Harrogate, United Kingdom. I am taking this opportunity to provide an update since my October 2006 letter.

(U) We have completed the first phase of our declassification effort--identifying potential impediments and risks. While a variety of issues were identified, acceptable mitigation plans were available to address each one. Therefore, I plan to proceed to the next phase--mitigation--after which I will be in a position to request concurrence of the Director of National Intelligence concerning declassification. Once this decision is finalized, I have no plans to publicize the issue, nor do I plan to declassify any information that pre-dates this declassification about the "fact of" NRO presence.

(U) Thank you very much for your continued support, and I will keep you informed as this effort progresses.

Sincerely,

Donald M. Kerr

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DECL ON: 25X1, 20311104, RRG dated July 2005
DRV FROM: NRO Classification Guide 6.0, 21 May 2005

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