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HANDLE VIA  
TALENT-KEYHOLE-COMINT  
CONTROL SYSTEMS JOINTLY

B 57,329/67

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

February 9, 1967

Dear Al:

As I understand it, NASA's most recent program plans call for flying the Lunar Survey and Mapping Cameras in earth orbit in 1968 as part of the Apollo Applications Program. I am aware that you have an agreement with NASA that photographs of the earth taken during these flights by the Gambit camera will remain in the Talent-Keyhole system. However, it will soon be time for NASA to describe its 1968 plans to Congress and the public. I am concerned that if it is made public now that these camera flights will be a part of the 1968 program, there will be great public pressure to release the photographs when the flights are actually made. If so, in spite of your agreement with NASA and the good intentions of all concerned, it may not be possible to maintain the classification of the photographs or possibly even the camera.

In view of this, it would seem desirable that any public discussion of this part of the NASA program should be carefully designed to conform to a prearranged set of procedures which describe in some detail how we will face the contingencies that can be expected. Some of the questions that come to mind include, for example, whether we would publicly state that the photographs are classified or release degraded pictures which would hide camera capabilities, and how we would meet inquiries concerning the specifications of the camera. I would appreciate hearing from you about where we stand in regard to the definition of such procedures.

Sincerely,



Donald F. Hornig  
Special Assistant to the President  
for Science and Technology

Dr. Alexander H. Flax  
Assistant Secretary of the  
Air Force for Research and Development  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D. C.

~~SECRET~~

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

HANDLE VIA  
TALENT-KEYHOLE-COMINT  
CONTROL SYSTEMS JOINTLY

B-57, 330/67

February 9, 1967

Dear Bob:

As I understand it, NASA's most recent program plans call for flying the Lunar Survey and Mapping Cameras in earth orbit in 1968 as part of the Apollo Applications Program. I am aware that you have an agreement with the NRO that photographs of the earth taken during these flights by the Gambit camera will remain in the Talent-Keyhole system. However, it will soon be time for NASA to describe its 1968 plans to Congress and the public. I am concerned that if it is made public now that these camera flights will be a part of the 1968 program, there will be great public pressure to release the photographs when the flights are actually made. If so, in spite of your agreement and the good intentions of all concerned, it may not be possible to maintain the classification of the photographs or possibly even the camera.

In view of this, it would seem desirable that any public discussion of this part of the NASA program should be carefully designed to conform to a prearranged set of procedures which describe in some detail how we will face the contingencies that can be expected. Some of the questions that come to mind include, for example, whether we would publicly state that the photographs are classified or release degraded pictures which would hide camera capabilities, and how we would meet inquiries concerning the specifications of the camera.

I have asked Dr. Flax to let me know how we stand with regard to the formulation of procedures which would conform to presently established classification policy. I assume that you are working closely with him on this and I hope that you will be able to avoid any public statements in this regard until we have a set of procedures that has received concurrence by an appropriate forum.

Sincerely,

Donald F. Hornig  
Special Assistant to the President  
for Science and Technology

Dr. Robert C. Seamans, Jr.  
Deputy Administrator  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Washington, D. C.

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