

INTERPRETATION OF STATUTE

Mr. REID. Now under the act, as I have it here, access to information:

Section 303. Information obtained or developed by the Administrator who performs his functions under the Act shall be made available for public inspection except information authorized or required by Federal statutes to be withheld, and information—

Dr. DRYDEN. This is what I would claim intelligence information is.

Mr. REID. Yes; but I don't know any senior official of the Government who is in total agreement with the classification procedure of the intelligence community.

Dr. DRYDEN. However, there are procedures. You have indicated in specific cases there is the opportunity to ask for a consideration of declassification.

We have not taken the initiative in this case, and do not believe it appropriate to do so. We have in particular cases of classification within the Department of Defense asked reconsideration. This is the normal procedure. Sometimes a matter may be declassified. Other times the classification may be kept.

Mr. REID. But you have never made a serious overall assessment of whether or not the broad field is overclassified, and that it could be to some extent declassified.

Dr. DRYDEN. I do not believe an intelligence operation can be carried out in the open before the public generally.

Mr. REID. I am not suggesting that.

Dr. DRYDEN. Well, you are suggesting that the results be given.

Mr. REID. I am suggesting that NASA assume its full responsibilities under the statute.

Dr. DRYDEN. We will.

Mr. REID. And as pertinent to that you could properly sit down and review the overall intelligence picture to determine whether there are areas that could be made available.

Dr. DRYDEN. We will review the general relative progress of the United States and Russia at any time the committee wishes, and we will use in our judgments and what we say all the information that is available. But we cannot give you the chapter, verse, detail of intelligence information.

Mr. REID. That is not quite the thrust of my inquiry. I will just ask one more question and then be silent.

But have you ever sat down with the intelligence community, consistent with your authority under the statute for NASA, to study whether or not a greater degree of information with regard to Soviet space failures could be presented in some fashion, without danger to our intelligence collection techniques?

Dr. DRYDEN. I do not personally see what the public has to gain from anything other than the general knowledge that there are failures, and that they are roughly of the same order that we have * * *.

Mr. REID. That is, it seems to me a value judgment as to what the American people should be told. But might I ask whether you have ever gone through this process in your capacity and responsibility for NASA with the intelligence community, to see whether there are areas that could be presented to the American people?