



## Corona: America's First Satellite Program

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The nation's first photo reconnaissance satellite system, operating from August 1960 until May 1972. The program was declassified in February 1995. Since the CORONA satellite made its first successful flight in August 1960, the Intelligence Community's overhead reconnaissance programs have been among the nation's most closely guarded secrets. The end of the Cold War, however, has at last made it possible to declassify both information and imagery from the first American satellite systems of the 1960s. To do this, President William Clinton in February of this year ordered the declassification within 18 months of historical intelligence imagery from the early satellite systems known as the CORONA, ARGON, and LANYARD. Because the President's Executive Order 12958 envisions scientific and environmental uses for this satellite imagery, the declassified photographs will be transferred to the National Archives with a copy sent to the US Geological Survey. Vice President Albert Gore, who first urged the Intelligence Community to open up its early imagery for environmental studies, unveiled the first CORONA satellite photographs for the American press and public at CIA Headquarters on 24 February 1995. To mark this new initiative, CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence and the Space Policy Institute at George Washington University are cosponsoring a conference, "Piercing the Curtain: CORONA and the Revolution in Intelligence," in Washington on 23-24 May 1995. On the occasion of this conference, the CIA History Staff is publishing this collection of newly declassified documents and imagery from the CORONA program. This is the fourth volume in the CIA Cold War Records Series, which began in 1992 when Director of Central Intelligence Robert Gates launched CIA's Openness Policy and reorganized the Center for the Study of Intelligence to include both the History Staff and a new Historical Review Group to declassify historically important CIA records. The editor of this new volume, Dr. Kevin C. Ruffner, has an A.B. from the College of William and Mary and an M.A. in history from the University of Virginia. He joined the CIA History Staff in 1991, soon after he received his Ph.D. in American Studies from George Washington University. The documents and imagery in this volume were reviewed and declassified with unusual dispatch by a special working group of declassification officers from the National Reconnaissance Office, the Central Imagery Office, CIA's Directorate of Science and Technology, and its National Photographic Interpretation Center. The group's prompt work is especially notable since many documents required consultation with the US Air Force, National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Energy, Department of State, and CIA's Collection Requirements and Evaluation Staff. This volume's appearance just three months after President Clinton's declassification order is yet another tribute to the skill and speed that the History Staff of the Center for the Study of Intelligence has come to expect from the Design Center and Publications Center in the Directorate of Intelligence, and from the Directorate of Administration's Printing and Photography Group.

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