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THE SPY RACE: FIRST DEVELOPMENTS ON US SPY SATELLITES DURING THE COLD WAR.

Abstract

The 8th of October 1957, a day after the successful launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik, US president Dwight D Eisenhower, gave a speech and a press conference to address this new space situation. One journalist asked president Eisenhower: *“Do you not think that it has immense significance, the satellite, in surveillance of other countries?”* Indeed, that question proves to be one of the most significant uses satellites would have in the following years.

After Sputnik, and far away from public opinion and the most well know space race, another more calculated, secret and strategic race was in place. The use of satellite for reconnaissance and intelligence missions was a possibility long studied in US since the 1940s. And as soon as the space race began, a development of military spy satellites took place.

This paper will examine and analyze the first programs and efforts in reconnaissance, electronic intelligence, and space science related to these spy satellites, that took place in US during the first decades of the space age. It will analyse first US spy programmes and succes such as, such as Corona, Samos, Gambit, Grab, or Poppy. Programs that were key elements for the intelligence community and the military. And that despite being less famous than their contemporary civil ones, such as Mercury, Gemini or Apollo, they had a tremendous impact in shaping the actual international framework for space activities and legislation (such as the notion of freedom of space). And in essence, they shaped the military uses of space and space systems in nowadays.