DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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NATION'S LARGEST EARTH RESOURCES PHOTO CENTER DEDICATED

The $5 million Earth Resources Observation Systems (EROS) Data Center -- a national center for processing and disseminating spacecraft and aircraft images of the earth and for training users in the application of such data -- is scheduled to be dedicated August 7, 1973 by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

In a keynote address prepared for an audience of local, State and Federal government officials and prominent scientists, Secretary Morton described the EROS Program as a "most practical and useful development of the Nation's space program."

The Secretary's remarks continued, in part: "Although often overshadowed by the more spectacular milestones of our space effort, the EROS Program in a few short years has gotten down to the basic and pressing task of solving some of the real earthbound environmental problems that can best be studied from high altitude and space photography.

"The EROS Data Center, less than two years old, and operating out of interim facilities in downtown Sioux Falls, is already producing over 25,000 photographs and images per month in response to requests from users all over the world and by 1978 expects to be handling five or six times that workload. Seldom has an agency 'geared up' so fast and 'gone on line' so quickly to become a fully productive member of the Federal Government. Just last June the Data Center conducted a four week training course for 32 foreign students from 18 different countries."

"Much of the vision and credit for the EROS Data Center must go to two of the Government's hardest working public servants, the former Senator from South Dakota, Karl E. Mundt, and the late Under Secretary of the Interior, Dr. William T. Pecora.

(more)

"Senator Mundt was a key factor in building the support we needed to make the Data Center possible. Because it was largely through his efforts that what had been the dream of a few earth scientists became a reality, it is altogether fitting that the main data handling building at the EROS Data Center be named the Karl E. Mundt Federal Building. We also honor Dr. Pecora because it was he who from the very beginning not only had the vision to see the need for a systematic program of remote sensing of our natural resources but also had the ability to rally the necessary technical and scientific support. As Director of the Geological Survey and with the aid of his colleagues there, it was largely Dr. Pecora who launched earth science into the space age."

On the day before the dedication ceremonies, a "Technical Session for Laymen" was held in Sioux Falls, which featured distinguished lecturers from government, universities, and private industry who discussed "The Experiment and the Promise," "Scientific Results," and held a panel discussion on the technology that made the EROS Program possible.

Managed by the U.S. Geological Survey, the Interior Department's EROS Program has become the major recipient and user of the data supplied by both NASA's ERTS-1 (Earth Resources Technology Satellite) and by the sensors of the Earth Resources Experiment Package (EREP) aboard Skylab. The EROS Program currently has 65 scientific studies underway to apply space photography and data to resource management and research problems.

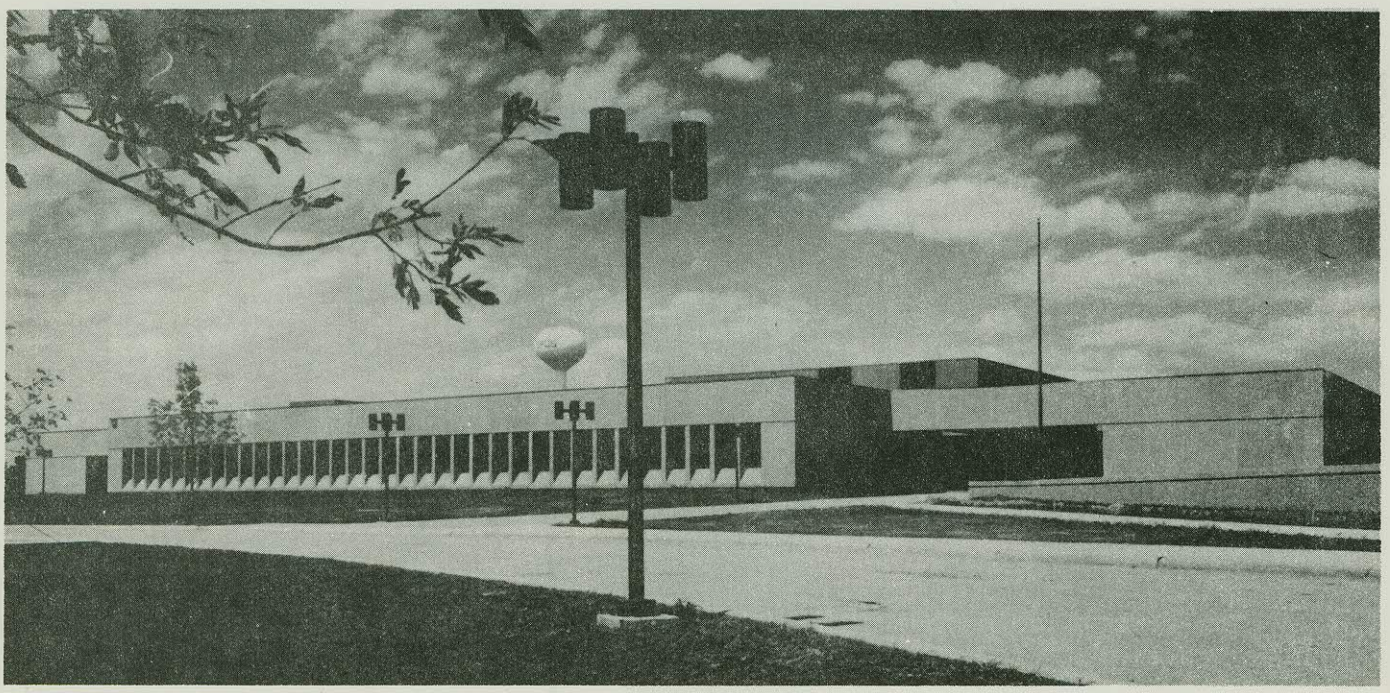
The EROS Data Center is a central repository where remote-sensor data are received and processed. The Center also provides professional and instrumental assistance to government and private users of the data and serves to further the work of resources and environmental scientists throughout the world. The principal sources of the remote-sensor data include NASA's satellites and aircraft data as well as Geological Survey aerial photography.

Located near Sioux Falls, the Data Center was constructed on a 318-acre site for the Federal Government under a 20-year lease-purchase agreement with the Sioux Falls Development Foundation, Inc.

At the heart of the center is the 107,000-square-foot Karl E. Mundt Federal Building which houses offices, conference rooms, photo browsing area, library, cafeteria, chemical laboratory, photo processing rooms, computer and tape storage rooms, archives, and cataloging and microfilming facilities, in addition to the many support and service areas. Among the unique features of this main data handling building are critical areas with sensitive instruments that are independently zoned for both temperature and humidity control and where workers are required to dress and work under controlled conditions in the preparation of high-quality photo images.

The Center's waste recycling system recovers about 95 percent of the silver and regenerates and recycles the bleaches and fixing solutions used in the photographic processes. The overall sewage disposal system, which includes three polishing ponds, an aeration pond, and a sediment pond, is designed to exceed Federal discharge water-quality standards.

The Center has been designed to handle the expected output of an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 images per week by 1978 and to provide for the functions of image generation from magnetic tape, photo reproduction, data extraction of cartographic quality, and special processing, library and archive services, and user training and assistance, as well as to accommodate the personnel needed to achieve the increased workload.

A leaflet describing the EROS Data Center and explaining how to purchase space and aerial photography is free upon application to the EROS Data Center, Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57198.

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