DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE ROGERS C. B. MORTON, SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, AT THE EROS DATA CENTER DEDICATION, SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA, AUGUST 7, 1973

The EROS Data Center is a product of unique insight and vision. It evidences our efforts to shape our future, by matching the aspirations and spirit of our people with the benefits of our technology. It is a major step -- hopefully the first of many -- in our quest to understand our environment and ourselves.

Although often overshadowed by the more spectacular milestones of our space program, EROS is the first major dividend from America's space effort that can be shared by all mankind. In a few short years EROS has gotten down to the pressing task of solving our real earthbound environmental problems.

EROS has truly global dimensions. For the benefits and scientific data from EROS are being made available to people and nations throughout the world.

In terms of bits of information, and sheer volume alone, there is probably more data stored here at the EROS Data Center than in any building on earth. In less than two years, and operating out of temporary facilities not far from here, the EROS Data Center has produced over 25,000 photoimages a month, servicing user needs from across the world. And by 1978 we will be processing five or six times that amount. This fact reflects the scale of the EROS program -- and the dimension of the problems and challenges EROS seeks to meet. The problem of the environment and man's need to develop and safeguard the earth's

resources is not limited to national borders. These are truly global problems, that can only be met by action on a global scale.

The promise of EROS has already become a reality. Initial experiments here at the Data Center have demonstrated the value this new tool has in developing land use planning, in monitoring natural phenomena, and in exploring the limits of our natural resources. And this is just a beginning.

The Skylab and ERTS programs, for example, have provided invaluable data to meet our energy and environmental needs. Satellite data has contributed to our evaluation of the environmental impact of oil development on Alaska's North Slope. An examination of the ERTS image of the northern tundra regions does not reveal evidence of significant degradation over the large area as a result of oil explorations during the 1940's and 1950's. If serious damage had been done, the satellite photos would have revealed it. Thus, ERTS has proved itself to be a major tool in environmental impact assessments.

The problems of the environment are, in part, a result of the triumph of our technology. EROS is a major effort to turn technology around to meet not only human needs -- but the needs of the environment. The great reward of EROS, is that it gives us an unobscured look at our natural world, and the effects of our relationship with our environment.

It clearly reveals: -

-- the scars and pock marks from open pit mining;

-- the sediment and siltation of our lakes and rivers;

-- as well as the air pollution enveloping our great industrial centers.

EROS will only provide us with data, however. Human judgment will still dominate the quality of our environment in the future.

This dedication is a celebration of the spirited leadership of a few earth scientists and elected officials. Each of them had disparate interests. All of them, however, foresaw the role space technology could play in enhancing our environment. While most people envisioned the emerging challenge of our space program as determining simply whether we could go beyond our air ocean -- these men demanded more. They wanted to know what our space program could do for man.

Dr. William Pecora, who was one of America's greatest earth scientists, had a clear perception of the energy, resource, and environmental problems confronting us. He had a belief that new technology, such as space development, could help us meet these challenges. His leadership in EROS literally launched the earth sciences into the space age.

Ben Reifel had a keen interest in developing the economic base of South Dakota.

Former Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall recognized the need for a continuing inventory of the effects resource development has on the environment. His belief in the need to explore new solutions to old problems was critical during the early years.

Al Shock, Mike ~~Shermer~~ Schirmer, Louis Warren, and others from Sioux Falls, grasped in a single meeting the potential significance of the EROS program and the fact that the geography of the world was changing.

It is especially fitting that the EROS Data Center will be located in the newly named Karl E. Mundt Federal Building. For it was Senator Mundt's leadership in the Congres that brought the vision of a few earth scientists into reality. It was Senator Mundt who foresaw the need to match Federal support for space technology with the new horizons in earth science.

EROS has already succeeded in bringing promise to reality. It has given us a new insight into our natural world and ourselves. Hopefully, it will guide us to new relationships with our environment--and lead to a more peaceful world.

Thank you.

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