

By: June 2007 Orneanu, Science Editor

## US Cancel Spy Satellite Program

### *A multibillion-dollar one*

The director of US national intelligence stated this week that a multibillion-dollar spy satellite program has been canceled, but gave no reason for his recent decision. Mike McConnell is the spy chief that almost ventured into disclosing some juicy details about the mission, but, unfortunately for us, he stopped in time. It's kind of strange that this announcement comes three days after the National Reconnaissance Office - one of the 16 intelligence agencies in the U.S. which designs, builds and operates the reconnaissance satellites of the United States government - launched a new spy satellite aboard an Atlas 5 rocket. "I have been advised when I was getting ready for this job, you have to do two things: kill a multibillion-dollar program. Just did that. Word is not out yet. You'll see soon. And fire somebody important. So I'm searching," he added in jest, getting a laugh from the crowd. Obviously, when asked which of the programs he had just canceled, McConnell declined to comment. It seems that the current technology simply wasn't able to meet expectations, so the program was engulfing too much money for what it was able to provide. In the United States, most information is available on programs regarding spy satellites that existed up to 1972. Some information about programs prior to that time is still classified and a small trickle of information is available on subsequent missions. The current spy satellites research program may be highly classified, but it represents some of the most expensive government programs and receives almost no public oversight. It's a good thing the spy chief didn't try to convince people that spy satellites were completely stopped because they were not worth the money, since that would have been a truly comic episode, even funnier than "Scary Movie" and most of the sitcoms.