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S E C R E T STATE 307013

E.O. 12065 GDS 11/27/85 (LEDOGAR, STEPHEN J.)

TAGS: PARM, MPOL, UR, SALT, NATO

SUBJECT: TNF: SOVIETS AND THE FALSE MISSILE ALERT
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REF: COPENHAGEN 7086 (DTG 211345Z NOV 79) (NOTAL)

1. (S-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION: A NOVEMBER 9 TEST TAPE SIMULATING A MISSILE ATTACK ON THE US WAS INADVERTENTLY TRANSMITTED OUTSIDE NORAD HEADQUARTERS. ALL COMMANDS HAD UNAMBIGUOUSLY AND CORRECTLY IDENTIFIED AND CONFIRMED THE DATA AS FALSE IN LESS THAN SIX MINUTES. FOUR DAYS LATER, AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN DELIVERED TO THE SECRETARY AN ORAL NOTE FROM BREZHNEV TO PRESIDENT CARTER IN WHICH BREZHNEV NOTED WITH CONCERN THE FALSE ALERT AND NOT TOO SUBTLY IMPLIED THAT THE USG'S PROCEDURES FOR CONTROLLING ITS FORCES WERE SOMEWHAT LACKING. END SUMMARY.

3. WE ARE CONSIDERING A RESPONSE TO BREZHNEV'S NOTE, BUT ARE CONCERNED THAT THE SOVIETS MAY ATTEMPT TO MAKE USE OF THIS INCIDENT TO CAST UNWARRANTED DOUBT ON THE RELIABILITY OF OUR NUCLEAR CONTROL AND THUS INFLUENCE ALLIED ATTITUDES ON THE EVE OF THE TNF MODERNIZATION/ ARMS CONTROL MINISTERIAL MEETINGS.

4. WE BELIEVE, THEREFORE, THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO INFORM THE ALLIES OF THE FACTS OF THE FALSE ALERT INCIDENT, AND THE BREZHNEV COMMUNICATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO AVOID DAMAGING RUMORS AND UNNECESSARY CONCERN. WE WOULD SUGGEST THAT USNATO USE THE TALKING POINTS IN PARA 6 AND 7 TO BRIEF THE PERMREPS AT AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY, AND NATO CAPITALS DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING IN ANSWERING OFFICIAL QUERIES.

5. YOU SHOULD UNDERScore AS YOU DO SO THE REDUNDANT AND SECRET

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COMPLETE NATURE OF OUR WELL-ESTABLISHED CONFIRMATION AND CONTROL MECHANISMS WHICH WERE PROVEN TO BE QUICKLY AND APPROPRIATELY RESPONSIVE TO THE SITUATION AS IT DEVELOPED. EMPHASIZE THAT NO STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCES WERE ACTIVATED. ALSO EMPHASIZE THAT THE SYSTEM WAS AGAIN SHOWN TO BE RESPONSIVE, TO HAVE SAFEGUARDS AGAINST HASTY ACTION, AND TO HAVE A DESIGN WHICH ASSURES THAT HUMAN JUDGMENT CAN OVERRIDE INADVERTENT MALFUNCTIONS. FINALLY, YOU SHOULD ALSO EMPHASIZE THE FACT THAT THE SOVIETS SEEM TO BE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF ANY SITUATION TO DILUTE ALLIANCE SUPPORT FOR A DECEMBER DECISION TO

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MODERNIZE AND DEPLOY NATO'S LRTNF. THEREFORE, AS WE MOVE TOWARD AND THROUGH THE MINISTERIALS, IT IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO PRESENT A UNIFIED, STRONG IMAGE TO THE EAST.

6. THE NOVEMBER 9 FALSE ALERT: YOU SHOULD USE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO BRIEF THE ALLIES ON THE NORAD INCIDENT. (FYI: THE GIST OF THE INFORMATION IN THE FIRST TIC BELOW WAS PASSED BY DOD TO NETHERLANDS ATTACHE ON 14 NOV IN RESPONSE TO URGENT REQUEST FROM NETHERLANDS DEFENSE MINISTRY WHO EXPECTED QUERY IN PARLIAMENT ON 15 NOV. END FYI)

-- A PORTION OF A RECORDED TEST SCENARIO WAS ERRONEOUSLY TRANSMITTED OUTSIDE NORAD HEADQUARTERS TO A NUMBER OF OTHER COMMANDS AND AGENCIES. THE ENTIRE SYSTEM HAS A NUMBER OF BUILT-IN CHECKS AND REDUNDANCIES. BECAUSE OF THESE, THE TEST DATA WAS ALMOST IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZED AS SPURIOUS. ALL COMMAND LEVELS DEMONSTRATED ENTIRELY PROPER RESPONSIBILITY IN HANDLING THE DATA. NO STRATEGIC NUCLEAR UNITS TOOK ANY STEPS TOWARD ADVANCED ALERT. ALL COMMANDS HAD UNAMBIGUOUSLY AND CORRECTLY IDENTIFIED AND CONFIRMED THE DATA AS FALSE IN LESS THAN SIX MINUTES. BECAUSE OF AN ALERT PRIOR TO THAT TIME, A

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SMALL NUMBER OF AIR DEFENSE AIRCRAFT TOOK OFF FROM THEIR BASES TO ASSUME AN ALERT POSTURE. THESE WERE RECALLED IN A FEW MINUTES -- NONE CARRIED ANY NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

-- THE PROCEDURES USED TO EVALUATE THE MISSILE LAUNCH INDICATION PROVED TO BE EFFECTIVE, FAST AND CORRECT.

7. SOVIET MESSAGE: DRAW ON FOLLOWING:

-- ON NOVEMBER 13 AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN DELIVERED AN ORAL MESSAGE FROM BREZHNEV TO PRESIDENT CARTER EXPRESSING SOVIET CONCERN OVER THE INCIDENT. WE ARE CONSIDERING A RESPONSE TO BREZHNEV'S MESSAGE.

-- WE CONSIDER IT POSSIBLE THAT THE SOVIETS MAY RETURN TO THIS INCIDENT PUBLICLY AS DECEMBER 12 APPROACHES

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IN A FURTHER EFFORT TO DERAIL TNF DEPLOYMENT.

-- WE WANTED TO SHARE THE FACTS OF THE EVENT WITH
YOU IN ADVANCE OF ANY SUCH POSSIBILITY.

8. FOR COPENHAGEN: THIS RESPONDS TO REFTTEL.

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