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E.O. 12065:GDS 11/13/85 (VANCE, CYRUS)

TAGS: MNUC, UR, US

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT ON NUCLEAR
ATTACK FALSE ALARM

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT)
2. DOBRYNIN AT HIS REQUEST CALLED ON THE SECRETARY TODAY TO DELIVER THE FOLLOWING ORAL MESSAGE FROM BREZHNEV TO THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSING CONCERN AT REPORTS OF A RECENT FALSE ALARM TO US FORCES OF A NUCLEAR MISSILE ATTACK. THE SECRETARY SAID HE WOULD PASS THE MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT AND GET BACK TO DOBRYNIN LATER ON THIS QUESTION. GEORGE VEST, WHO SAT IN ON THE CONVERSATION, STRESSED TO DOBRYNIN THAT WE ARE STILL REVIEWING THE INCIDENT AND THAT WE HAVE A NUMBER OF MECHANISMS TO ENSURE THAT OUR FORCES ARE NOT MISTAKENLY EMPLOYED.

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PAGE 02 STATE 295771

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QUOTE. REPORTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED THAT RECENTLY, DUE TO SOME ERRONEOUS ACTIONS, THE US TECHNICAL SYSTEMS GAVE A SIGNAL OF A NUCLEAR MISSILE ATTACK ON THE UNITED STATES WHICH RESULTED IN PUTTING APPROPRIATE MEANS ON ALERT.

MR. PRESIDENT, I THINK IT IS QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE THAT THE SAID FACT SHOULD CAUSE A FEELING OF EXTREME ANXIETY IN THE MIND OF EVERY STATE LEADER WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POLICY OF HIS COUNTRY. IT IS REPORTED THAT AN UNFORSEEN ERROR HAS OCCURRED. LET IT BE SO. BUT A FALSE SIGNAL OF NUCLEAR MISSILE ATTACK DID TAKE PLACE. AND THIS IS FRAUGHT WITH A TREMENDOUS DANGER. WHAT KIND OF MECHANISM IT IS WHICH ALLOWS A POSSIBILITY OF SUCH INCIDENTS? ONE HARDLY NEEDS MANY WORDS TO CHARACTERIZE CORRECTLY THIS FACT.

FINALLY, ACCORDING TO REPORTS THE INCIDENT WAS REPORTED NEITHER TO YOU NOR TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENCE, NOR TO ANY OTHER RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS. THIS ONLY EXACERBATES THE SITUATION. IT TURNS OUT THAT THE WORLD CAN FIND ITSELF ON THE BRINK OF A PRECIPICE WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRESIDENT OR OF OTHER US LEADERS.

I THINK YOU WILL AGREE THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO ERRORS IN SUCH MATTERS. THEY MUST BE COMPLETELY EXCLUDED-- NOT 99, BUT ALL 100 PER CENT. ALTHOUGH NOW REFERENCES ARE MADE TO THE FACT THAT THE ERROR OCCURRED DUE TO A COMPUTER FAULT IT IS CLEAR THAT IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS APPROPRIATE DECISIONS WERE MADE BY PEOPLE.

I COULD NOT HELP, MR. PRESIDENT, DRAWING YOUR
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PAGE 03 STATE 295771

ATTENTION TO THIS CURCUMSTANCE AND EXPRESSING MY JUDGEMENT IN A MOST FRANK MANNER. END QUOTE. VANCE

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