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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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June 5, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Attached is a copy of the fact sheet concerning the June 3 missile warning incident, which the President saw this morning. The President has asked that you receive a copy with his two questions. (S)

Zbigniew Brzezinski

Attachment

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Review June 5, 1986

DECLASSIFIED
White House Guidelines, September 11, 2006
NARA Date 8/19/14

4 June 1980

FACT SHEET

During the morning of 3 June a missile warning incident occurred which caused certain precautionary measures to be taken within our strategic forces in accordance with standard procedures. The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information concerning this incident and to outline corrective steps which have been and will be taken.

Technical problems in the computer system that provides information to the National Command System caused erroneous data to be generated which in turn provided indications in the National Military Command Center (NMCC) and at the Strategic Air Command (SAC) Headquarters of a missile attack against the United States. However, key missile warning sensor systems, which are connected directly to the NMCC, to the SAC Command Center, and to the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) gave no indication of hostile missile activity and, therefore, strong indications of the spurious nature of the data were available. Throughout the incident, the data at NORAD headquarters reflected that all sensor systems were functioning properly and that no missile launches had been detected by these sensors.

The first threat indication was received by SAC directly from the NORAD computer. The indication was a missile warning display of two Sea Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) trajectories indicating the possibility of the missiles being targeted against the United States. Within a short time, this display had increased to a large number of SLBM trajectories. The SAC Senior Controller, acting in accordance with standard procedures, initiated an alarm which caused all SAC alert bomber, tanker, and postattack command and control crews to move to alert aircraft, start engines, and await further instructions. Commander in Chief, SAC, subsequently directed that the SAC crews shut down engines but remain in their aircraft.

The National Emergency Airborne Command Post (NEACP) at Andrews AFB received the initial notification of a possible threat of large numbers of SLBMs and automatically initiated actions preparatory to emergency launch. By the time the NEACP had taxied into position for takeoff, the SLBM threat no longer appeared on the display consoles in the NMCC and the senior watch officer directed the NEACP to hold in place. The Pacific Command Airborne Command Post, however, did launch in response to the indications.

What caused it? Corrective action?

This incident may appear similar to the false indication of a missile attack which occurred on November 9, 1979. However, that event was caused by an inadvertent injection of a test scenario into the NORAD computer system. Extensive corrective actions have been taken to prevent a similar incident, and all testing and corrective work is being transferred to a separate computer system. The cause of the events on 3 June is as yet undetermined. All possibilities are being pursued. A long term effort will be initiated to determine and correct basic problems within the entire system. Until this review is completed, the NMCC, SAC and NORAD Command Centers will be on a special watch condition known as "Voice Tell," which insures that a special secure telephone connection is in effect to provide a parallel line of communications. This will permit information to be passed immediately from one center to the other, overriding if necessary any false computer driven indications of an attack.

Throughout the event on 3 June; the command center personnel at all locations performed well and in accordance with established directives.

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