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already recommended.

11. Reply to Oral Message from Brezhnev to the President on False Alert: NSC Staff asked Marshall Shulman late Wednesday for State's concurrence on a draft response to Brezhnev (at Tab 5), which they say already has Harold's and Zbig's approval. We don't see any need to rush. We don't owe the Soviets an immediate response. It's important that we think through carefully the Soviets' motive as well as the content and tone of our response. We suggest that you tell Harold and Zbig that Reggie will be in touch with their staffs shortly with our own views on a response.

(FYI: -- If Zbig or Harold push this particular draft, you might note that while we agree we should not accept the tone of the Soviet message, we've got to think through carefully how we respond on the merits).

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
-REVIEW AUTHORITY: THEODORE SELLIN  
DATE/CASE ID: 23 DEC 2002 199804489

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LATE SUPPLEMENT TO VBB ITEM  
ON BREZHNEV ORAL MESSAGE ON FALSE ALERT

You should resist discussion of this particular draft. But NSC Staff claims Zbig wants to move their draft to the President immediately. Therefore if you find a discussion of their draft unavoidable, you might make the following points:

- We agree that the tone of Brezhnev's message is unacceptable.
- But in crafting the substance of our response, we've got to give careful thought to what the Soviets' intention really is and how they might use our response. They may see some way to exploit the incident and this exchange in the TNF context.
- If we appear too cavalier they could use this to fuel European anxieties about deployment of U.S. LRTNF and our control over them.

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