

SECRET ATTACHMENT

November 14, 1979

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MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Attached is a copy of your Evening Report
of November 13, with a comment by the President.

Zbigniew Brzezinski

Attachment

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SECRET #10A

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

Cy. Vance
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November 13, 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Cyrus Vance

1. Iran: I have your note of this morning concerning Iran. No one has any idea of leaving any of our Embassy personnel in Iran after the hostages are released. In fact, we have already completed our plans for the evacuation of all our Embassy people when the hostages are released. We have also made preliminary arrangements with the Swiss to act as the caretaker for the Embassy property. We have obviously done this in total secrecy. We have also been working on and have 95% complete the steps which would be taken here in connection with their diplomats and diplomatic property in the United States.

2. Briefings on Iran: Bill Miller, Charlie Duncan and I briefed the Senate and House this afternoon on the Iran situation and your decision to discontinue purchasing Iranian oil. The members were almost universally supportive of the decision and our handling of the crisis. A number of questions indicated that some members are considering their own punitive measures for the time when the hostages are set free. For example, we were asked today about food shipments to Iran, Iranian assets in US banks, a possible multilateral effort to embargo Iranian oil and the status of Khomeini's struggle with dissident groups within Iran. Just before the House briefing, a Bauman amendment to the Continuing Resolution prohibiting military and economic assistance to Iran was passed by a unanimous roll call vote. The leadership could do little else but limit debate and keep the provocation level to a minimum.

[Handwritten initials]

RDS 2/3 11/13/99 (Vance, Cyrus)

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3. South Atlantic Nuclear Event: A New Zealand Government Institute has discovered three short-lived isotopes in a rainwater sample which covers August, September and October 1979. The quantities of these isotopes is two times the normal background and higher than the laboratory has seen since the French stopped atmospheric testing in the Southern Pacific.

We are arranging to collect a portion of another New Zealand sample which is available for analysis in the US. This should be completed within one week. Until we are able to verify the analysis ourselves, we are maintaining a press line which indicates that we are not yet in a position to corroborate the original Vela satellite information.

4. Lancaster House: Although the British made considerable effort last week -- including meetings with the Queen -- to convince Kaunda to use his influence with ZAPU/ZANU to gain their agreement on the UK transitional proposals, his visit to London has not thus far led to visible progress at the conference table. According to the British, Kaunda left London satisfied, and a top Kaunda aide told an embassy officer that Kaunda thought a settlement was now a real possibility. At this point, the British believe that Nkomo is close to agreeing to the British proposals but fear Mugabe may draw him back. The British are pressing the Patriotic Front for a reply to their transition proposals and we expect the conference may reach the make or break point by the end of this week. If agreement can be reached on the transition, the conference would then address ceasefire arrangements.

5. Nicaragua: There has been further progress in providing military medical teams to Nicaragua. Late last week our principal liaison with the army confirmed acceptance of US military medical field teams and requested an increase in the number of teams from six to ten. Ambassador Pezzullo believes this represents not just an upgrading of the need for such teams, but also a further step toward cooperation with us by the Nicaraguan Government.

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6. Brezhnev Message on Nuclear Attack False Alarm:

Dobrynin came by at his request today to deliver the attached oral message in which Brezhnev expresses to you his concern at reports of a false alarm to US forces of a nuclear-missile attack. I told Dobrynin that I would pass it to you and get back to him later on this question. George Vest, who sat in the conversation, stressed to Dobrynin on the way out that we are still reviewing the incident but that we have a number of mechanisms to ensure that our forces are not mistakenly deployed.

This incident was never reported to me nor has any analysis of the reason been given to me. Why not?

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ORAL MESSAGE BY L.I.BREZHNEV TO PRESIDENT CARTER

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 unforeseen 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 attention to this circumstance and expressing my judgement in a most frank manner.