

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET

January 12, 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI
 FROM: WILLIAM E. ODOM *WEO*
 SUBJECT: Weekly Report (U)

The following is a revision per your request. (U)

Tactical Warning of a Strategic Attack (U)

During Colonel Odom's visit to CINCLANT last week, Admiral Train made the argument that close-in Soviet YANKEE-Class SSBN patrolling does not portend the kind of danger of surprise attack that General Ellis, CINCSAC, believes it does. In fact, Admiral Train argues that disappearance of the two or three SSBNs off the East Coast would be a more alarming development. The accompanying JCS representative, Admiral Kelln, has brought Admiral Train's arguments back to the JCS where they are being debated against the CINCSAC arguments. (TS)

The implications of CINCLANT's case, of course, are that there is less probability of the short-warning scenario with only a few minutes for SIOP decision making and no time to evacuate to NEACP or elsewhere. He reasons that the Soviets' world-wide fleet deployment must also be assessed because most of the time it would be vulnerable to destruction by the U.S. fleet. Preparation for Soviet attack, therefore, would be preceded by moving much of the Soviet navy to safer locations, including withdrawals of SSBNs into the Barents Sea. General Ellis at SAC rejects this analysis by insisting that the benefits of a surprise SSBN attack for the Soviets could easily outweigh the loss of most of their fleet. It is not an argument easy to resolve, but a challenge to the traditionally dominant SAC viewpoint should generate a healthy review of the warning issue in the JCS. (TS)

The debate, however, points up an issue which will confront us more often in the future: the significance of the growing C³I vulnerability to a decapitation attack. If it became a public matter, it could be used to generate a level of concern and unease far greater than concern over the vulnerability of our land-based ICBM force. It is easier for journalists to articulate and easier for the average citizen to grasp. (S)

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Review on January 12, 1999

Extended by Z. Brzezinski

Reason for Extension: NSC 1.13(e)