

UNCLASSIFIED E46

MDS note



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

RELEASED IN PART B5

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November 16, 1979

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Cy:

While I cleared in draft PM's memo about the response to Brezhnev on the false alert, the following points occurred to me as I read the final product just now:

1) Notice at the bottom of page one that the SOP does not provide for notification of the Secretary of State in the event of an all-out attack. I think this procedure should be questioned.

2) What the memo doesn't say is that false alerts of this kind are not a rare occurrence. There is a complacency about handling them that disturbs me.

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3) On page 2, para 2, I think the statements about hidden political purposes on the part of the Soviet Union in raising this question with us are not very sensible. Wouldn't we be concerned if we had information of a similar false alert in the Soviet Union that resulted in the scrambling of a dozen planes?

4) The proposed reply, although somewhat less snide than the original draft, is kindergarten stuff -- not worthy of the United States. Why do we have to be so gratuitously snotty?

I would prefer a more straightforward response along the following lines:

The concern expressed in your message over reports of a technical malfunction during a military training exercise is understandable. I have looked into the matter and can tell you that the press accounts were incomplete and therefore misleading.

Thus, the incident to which you refer does not bring into question United States control over its military forces. This instance in fact demonstrates that the multiple safeguards we employ operate reliably. I agree with you that there should be no errors in such matters.

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