



OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1977–1980, VOLUME IV, NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

56. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski) to President Carter¹

Washington, March 20, 1978

SUBJECT

Questions From Your NMCC Visit

Harold Brown has responded with written answers² to clear up the questions raised during your visit to the National Military Command Center at the Pentagon.³

You need not read through the details; I have, therefore, summed up the crux of the five answers.

I. [1 paragraph (11 lines) not declassified]

II. [1 paragraph (11 lines) not declassified]

III. False alarms in our warning system.

- Since activation of BMEWS in 1960, there have been seven false alarms. The CINCNORAD “assessed confidence” was “no” in all cases.
- The last false alarm was December 1976.

IV. [1 paragraph (6 lines) not declassified]

V. Secretary Brown's communication checks with you when you are away from Washington.

- During the first 24 hours after your arrival at a trip location, the WHCA trip officer normally gives the NMCC in the Pentagon a chance to make a test call.
- The Secretary of Defense, if he makes a test call to you in the future, will first check with your side to determine your availability.

These answers raise as many new questions as they resolve. I draw one *overall conclusion*: Our “C3 I”, that is, our command and control and intelligence warning, is not in the best shape. It needs constant review and remedial effort. Your attention keeps up the right kinds of pressure in the Defense Department.⁴

1. Source: Carter Library, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Brzezinski Office File, Subject Chron File, Box 86, Defense: 1978. Top Secret; Sensitive. Outside the System. The date is handwritten.↵

2. See Document 51.
3. See footnote 2, Document 50.
4. Carter drew a vertical line in the right margin of this paragraph and wrote below it: “I Agree. J.”