



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 Carter<sup>1</sup>

Washington, March 20, 1978

SUBJECT

Questions From Your NMCC Visit

Harold Brown has responded with written answers<sup>2</sup> to clear up the questions raised during your visit to the National Military Command Center at the Pentagon.<sup>3</sup>

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 CINCORAD "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.<sup>4</sup>

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. e

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

3. 20. '78

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT  
FROM: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI  
SUBJECT: Questions From Your NMCC Visit

TOP SECRET

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

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

I. Vulnerability of infrared warning satellites (DSP) to Soviet lasers.

- Although the Soviets could jam (not destroy) our DSPs with lasers, they have not yet deployed the necessary equipment.
- Our future DSP design incorporates features to reduce (not eliminate) the jamming effects. If our current DSPs were jammed, a replacement with these improvements could be launched in 45 to 61 days.
- We currently have no plan to build a capability for laser jamming of Soviet infrared satellites.

II. Warning of SLBM attack.

- The present system, a mix of DSPs and ground-based radars, gives incomplete coverage.
- A new system, which adds two PAVE PAWS radars on the ground, will be operational by 1980. It cannot be "overflowed" like the present 474N ground radar network, and it will greatly improve our capability although gaps will remain.
- A four-site PAVE PAWS phased array is also under consideration which would provide "essentially complete coverage of SLBM launches."

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE  
CODEWORD ATTACHMENT

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."

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

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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. Secure communications with NEACP (Airborne Command Plane).

-- You recall that it was impossible to talk to NEACP on secure voice during the NMCC. This was due to HY-2 "narrow band" secure voice equipment.

-- By late June 1978, "wide band" secure voice equipment will be installed on NEACP to overcome this difficulty.

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These answers raise as many new questions as they resolve. I draw one overall conclusion: Our "C<sup>3</sup> 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.)

*I agree*  
J

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