



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



20 DEC 1988

Honorable Richard L. Thornburgh  
Attorney General  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Dick:

Shortly after the Internet computer virus attack, which was first detected on November 2, 1988, we formed an executive after action assessment team within the Department of Defense. The team met on November 14, 1988, and reviewed the events and actions taken after detection of the virus on ARPANET and MILNET; reviewed the report by the National Computer Security Center titled "Proceedings of the Virus Post-Mortem Meeting, November 8, 1988," (Enclosure 1); reviewed the DARPA report on the technical characteristics of the virus (Enclosure 2); and concluded with recommendations for improving the Department's responsiveness to future attacks.

As you will see from the team's report to me (Enclosure 3), the two areas on which we need to focus are the development of a central, national level coordination center, and increased computer security awareness. It became quickly evident during their analysis that the actions that need to be taken in the unclassified domain should be addressed jointly by the National Computer Security Center (NCSC) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), with technical coordination from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. There will clearly be a need for significant involvement from Justice and the FBI in determining what investigative and legislative guidelines should be put in place with the coordination center.

I have requested that each of the Defense Components involved in the after action assessment support the recommendations on a priority basis. I solicit your personal support for this effort so that we can move rapidly to improve our national posture to deal with potential computer security problems in the future.

Sincerely,

Enclosures:  
As Stated

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Dec 88

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