



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



20 DEC 1988

Honorable William Verity
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Bill:

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 by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the National Computer Security Center (NCSC), with technical coordination from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

I have requested that each of the Defense Components involved in the after action assessment support the recommendations on a priority basis. In tasking the National Security Agency, I have asked that the NCSC be ready to work with the staff of NIST to address quickly the establishment of a central coordination center and the publication and wide distribution of computer security lessons learned from this incident. I solicit your personal support for this effort and ask that we 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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