OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM

THE WHITE HOUSE ,

WITH TOP COCKET HITHCHICK

July 17, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT:

False Alerts (U)

Attached is a copy of your July 12 memorandum to the President on false alerts, with his comment. The President has affirmed his decision for on to hold the lead on any future investigations and corrective actions.

Zbigniew Brzezinski

Attachment

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Date: NOV 0 7 2018

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301

DECLASSIFIED IN PART Authority: EO 13526 Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS Date:

NOV 0 7 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Falso Alerts (U)

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🕟 I sent you memoranda on June 7 and 13 discussing various aspects of the false missile warning displays which resulted in

tinued investigating those incidents and this memorandum summarizes our present understanding of the cause, enumerates the corrective And actions underway, and assesses the public and congressional reac-

The Cause (U)

NORAD attributes the source of the spurious data to the intermittent failure of a 46c micro-electronic integrated circuit (often referred to as a "chip") in a data communications interface device at the NORAD Combat Operations Center in Colorado. Although NORAD has been unable to get the suspected circuit to fail again under test. The NORAH evaluation has been confirmed by an independent task force of highly competent and respected computer experts enlisted from the private sector. (U)

Corrective Actions (II) -

This particular electronic fault will be corrected by replacing the suspected integrated circuit; however, to prevent a similar, future hardware failure from cansing such an undetected error, we also are proceeding to improve the capabilities of the NORAD data communications system. Specifically, NORAD will:

set to alarm whenever a warning message (whether valid or not) is being sent so as to speed confidence checking

improve the throughout its computer and data communications: system.

make continuous and comprehensive records of system .. performance to be used to improve its troubleshooting capability ,

analyze its computers and communications equipment to find (and fix) other places where a

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2 Jul 2000

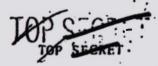
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Until these corrective actions are implemented (about 60 days)

NORAD will operate primarily on the

completely hypassing the equipment that caused
the recent incidents. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) have
assessed that this temporary mode of operations can be tolerated,
although it does have certain operational limitations, notably.

The JCS-directed procedural changes to

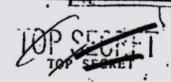
## Congressional Reaction (U)

The Chairmen of the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees of both Houses of Congress were notified of the false alerts less than 24 hours after they occurred. Congressional interest has remained high ever since. We have briefed the House Armed Services Committee and several Senators individually, and we continue to respond to many letters on the subject from members of Congress. Congress seems to have been mostly reassured by our explanations, but continues to express concern about the fact that

## Press Reaction (U)

Our approach to the news media has followed that which I outlined to you in my June 13 memorandum on false missile alerts. Most of the newspaper stories which appeared immediately after a June 18 press briefing by my Assistant Secretary for Communications, Command, Control, and Intelligence, Gerry Dinneen, correctly reflected the points in that memorandum. However, television network follow-up stories appearing June 24-26 have attempted to sensationalize (mushroom cloud) the incidents or to link them to unrelated matters. We continue to subject. We will have to continue to emphasize that there is no chance that any irretrievable actions would be taken based on ambiguous computer information, nor do the precautionary survivability measures in any way reduce the absolute human control over nuclear

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The Future

In summary, we are diligently pursuing corrective actions for the false alerts, just ws we specific cause of the addressed the specific cause of the November 9, 1979, event. Those causes were different, however, and as I reported to you in my June 13 memorandum, I believe we must be prepared for the possibility that another, unrelated malfunction may someday generate another false alert. Although we will make appropriate electronic improvements to minimize the probability of such a false alert, we must continue to place our confidence in the human element of our missile attack warning system. (U)

Office of the Secretary of Defense

Chief, RDD, ESD, WILS
Date: 07 Nov 2018 Authority: EO 13526+5 USC \$552

Declassify: Deny in Full:

Declassify in Part:
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