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6 March 1975

CHANGES IN THE STRATEGIC WARNING MECHANISM (S)

1. (S) Over the many years of its existence the Watch Committee and its staff, the National Indications Center, had come in for a certain amount of criticism in studies examining various facets of the strategic warning mechanism but had never really changed its way of doing business. The most recent round of critical reports might be said to have started in late 1972 with a study commissioned by Dr. Hall on the interface between large W and small w warning. This was eventually reacted to by the CIA in 1974 with a report also critical of the Watch Committee mechanism. That report said there had been a need perceived within and without the intelligence community to revamp the USIB watch mechanism. The basic conclusions of intelligence officers who participated in recent years in the activities of the Watch Committee were that there should be:

a. A USIB community watch mechanism to continue to serve as a discipline to prod existing community offices in their handling of the priority objective on intelligence concerning possible enemy attack.

b. A revitalization of the USIB Community's watch machinery to enable it to operate efficiently.

c. An updating and narrowing of the priorities of the watch structure to concentrate on the more direct threats to the US especially from the USSR and China.

d. A new, central location for the staff where it could be near the analytic support and communications that it must share.

e. An oversight group to monitor the work of the staff to ensure that it performed its functions satisfactorily.

2. (S) This report led the head of the IC Staff, at that time General Graham, to appoint an ad hoc interagency group to produce some recommendations on the matter. This group, under [redacted] chairman, met several times to come up with some agreed recommendations. General Wilson who replaced General [redacted] took this matter as a top priority. The interagency group worked out a revised DCID 1/5 on the new structure which was then sent to the USIB principals. They made some further changes and agreement was finally reached on 18 February of this year.

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3. (S) On 3 March 1975 the new structure came into being. A new position, that of Special Assistant to the Director of Central Intelligence for Strategic Warning, was created along with a Strategic Warning Staff. Major General [redacted] Deputy Director for Intelligence, DIA, was named

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Encl 1 to S. 0491/SWS

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the Special Assistant. Strategic warning was defined as the earliest possible warning that the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact, the PRC, or North Korea is considering military action by its armed forces beyond its borders, or is employing its military capabilities beyond borders in ways that might threaten military confrontation with the U.S.

4. (S) The functions of the Special Assistant and the Strategic Warning Staff are:

a. To carry on a continuing analysis of information and intelligence from all sources which might provide strategic warning.

b. When the situation warrants it, to issue strategic warning notices to the DCI, who will notify the President and National Security Council or take such other action as he deems necessary. The DCI will also transmit the strategic warning notices to the USIB principals for further dissemination within their departments and agencies. When time is of the essence, the Special Assistant may issue such notices directly to the President and NSC with concurrent dissemination to the DCI and USIB principals.

c. To issue such other reports on the status of strategic warning as the Special Assistant may direct.

d. To conduct studies and analyses with a view to improving the capabilities of the Intelligence Community to provide strategic warning and with due consideration for related work being done elsewhere in the Community.

e. To arrange with appropriate departments and agencies of the Government for the prompt forwarding to the Strategic Warning Staff of all the information it needs to carry out its mission.

5. (S) The responsibilities of the USIB departments and agencies are:

a. To provide full-time, senior professional intelligence personnel to the Strategic Warning Staff and other support as arranged by the Special Assistant.

b. To provide to the Strategic Warning Staff on a timely basis all information from every domestic and foreign source pertinent to the strategic warning mission, as is prescribed in NSAM 226.

6. (S) The DIA is providing the facilities for the Strategic Warning Staff, including communications, data processing, logistic and administrative support.

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7. (S) The Strategic Warning Staff is directed by [REDACTED] a CIA officer appointed by the DCI. He is directly responsible to General [REDACTED] and serves as his deputy for Strategic Warning. The staff is collocated with the National Military Intelligence Center and consists of intelligence officers assigned from appropriate elements of the community.

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8. (S) The Deputy to the DCI for the Intelligence Community, General Wilson, is responsible for forming a USIB working group to review the functioning of the strategic warning process.

9. (S) The T/O for the staff calls for ten analysts, two each from CIA, DIA and NSA and one each from Army, Navy, Air and State. In addition to the strategic warning notices, the staff plans to produce a monthly report for the DCI on developments in the warning field which will also be disseminated to previous recipients of the watch report. The staff will solicit contributions from the community while reserving the right to put forward its own interpretation or syntheses. There will be an informal coordinating process to surface any major disagreements and these will of course be noted. In this way, the least common denominator approach, which evoked so much criticism in the past, will be avoided.

10. (S) The staff will also prepare information reports for the DCI from time to time when it thinks it can add a little more depth or perspective to the current reporting on matters of strategic warning interest. Finally the staff hopes to do some digging on some of the key indicators and publish the findings as research reports.