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4 March 1975

"SMALL-w" WARNING

1. Ever since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, there has been widespread recognition within the U.S. Government of the need for mechanisms and procedures to warn the policy-maker of the imminence of military attack against the U.S. or U.S. forces overseas. This type of warning is called strategic warning, and the problem of providing such warning is referred to colloquially in the intelligence community as the "Big-W" warning problem.\*

2. Less clear-cut conceptually, and for that reason more difficult to come to grips with, has been the so-called "small-w" problem, i. e., the need to warn the policy-maker of a wide variety of critical developments--military, technological, political, and economic--which are less urgent than the threat of military attack against the U.S. but which, nevertheless, deserve his focused attention. Examples of such developments in the recent past are the Greek coup against Makarios in July 1974 and the subsequent Turkish invasion of Cyprus, India's explosion of a nuclear device in May 1974, OPEC's oil embargo and price increases in late 1973,

\*From 1954 until 3 March 1975, this function was carried out by the Watch Committee of USIB, which issued weekly reports assessing the likelihood of military attack against the U.S. As of the latter date, the Watch Committee was disestablished and the strategic warning function assumed by a Special Assistant to the DCI for Strategic Warning (Gen. [redacted] and a small Strategic Warning Staff under his direction.

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and the Portuguese coup in April 1974. Until recently, forecasts of such developments would appear (if at all) in one or another of a wide variety of intelligence products, e. g., the National Intelligence Bulletin, a Defense Intelligence Notice, an Interagency Analytic Memorandum, or a National Intelligence Estimate.\* Unfortunately, however, even if the projected development was effectively forecast, there was no assurance that the policy-maker actually read the forecast. And even if he did read it, there was the risk that he would overlook its significance. He was left largely to his own devices to glean from the mass of finished intelligence products constantly available to him which particular items deserved his special attention. The intelligence producer, after the event, was usually able to demonstrate that in one way or another he had forecast the event. But ordinarily he assumed no responsibility to provide specific warning of a particular event.

3. In order to fill this major gap in the community's warning procedures, the DCI in September 1974 instituted the system of issuing an Alert Memorandum (AM) when, in his view, the policy-maker needed to be specially warned of an imminent development.

4. Procedures for AMs were developed by an Ad Hoc Committee of USIB, chaired by the IC Staff. They were approved by USIB on 9 January 1975 (see attachment). They specify that AMs are to be addressed to the members of WSAG and disseminated, inter alia, to all USIB Principals. They assign to the NIOs primary responsibility for the preparation of AMs and provide for the appropriate coordination of AMs within the community. They provide also for the identification in AMs of follow-up actions, such as the establishment of a crisis task force or the initiation of special collection efforts.

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\*Over the years, the Watch Committee assumed a responsibility to report on military-related developments in certain crisis areas such as Vietnam and the Middle East. While this reporting went beyond its strategic warning charter, it covered only a small proportion of developments which fell within the "small-w" warning area.

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5. Seven Alert Memoranda have been issued to date, as follows:

27 Sept. 1974:	Possibility of Serious Civil Disturbances or a Coup in Phnom Penh
4 Oct. 1974:	Possibility of Radical Shift in Portuguese Policies
17 Jan. 1975:	Possibility of Inter-Communal Fighting and of Further Turkish Intervention in Cyprus
25 Jan. 1975:	Possible Coup in Portugal
30 Jan. 1975:	Possible Ramifications of Serious Hostilities in Southern Lebanon
5 Feb. 1975:	Possible Coup in Ethiopia
25X6A 7 Feb. 1975:	

6. Reactions to these memoranda have been generally favorable. There have been some complaints with respect to coordination and dissemination, but these have been addressed by the NIOs and are being remedied. While it is important that this new system not be overused and its impact diluted, it is equally important that it be utilized whenever appropriate to alert senior NSC-level officials to emerging situations which warrant their particular attention. In our view, the NIOs have shown excellent discretion in the use of this vehicle, and we believe it is already filling the procedural gap it was intended to fill.

Attachment:  
USIB-D-28.5/8

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