ALERT SYSTEM

OF THE
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

PART 1
CONCEPT (U)

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#366

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C 20301

[redacted]

29 JA. 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief of Staff, US Army
Chief of Naval Operations
Chief of Staff, US Air Force
Commandant of the Marine Corps
Commander in Chief, Aerospace Defense Command
Commander in Chief, Atlantic
US Commander in Chief, Europe
Commander in Chief, Military Airlift Command
Commander in Chief, Pacific
Commander in Chief, US Readiness Command
Commander in Chief, US Southern Command
Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command
Commander, Alaskan Air Command

Subject: Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Part I - Concept

1. Reference SM 410-74, dated 31 July 1974, subject as above, which promulgated the present concept for the Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

2. Effective 010001Z March 1981, this memorandum, together with the Appendix hereto, supersedes SM 410-74. This document incorporates those modifications determined to be necessary from experience in exercises and military operations

3. This memorandum is addressed to Commander, Alaskan Air Command, for JTF Alaska when activated.

4. Authority is hereby granted to extract pertinent portions of the attached document as necessary for the preparation of supporting documents. No other reproduction is authorized without written permission from the office of origin.

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5. Without attachment, this memorandum is UNCLASSIFIED.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Harold D. Neeley

HAROLD D. NEELEY
Colonel, USAF
Secretary, JCS

Attachment
a/s

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RECORD OF CHANGES

Identification of changes or corrections and copy numbers (when appropriate)	Date entered	By whom entered (Sig, Rank, Organization)

This Record of Changes and Corrections consists of 1 page

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL (U)

1. (U) Purpose. The purpose of this document is to promulgate the Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to prescribe the actions and responsibilities of applicable commanders when an alert condition (LERTCON) is declared or when selected alert actions are implemented.

2. (U) References. Close familiarity with the following documents is considered essential to a smooth functioning of the Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and related emergency action procedures:

   a. (U) Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Part II, LERTCON Actions.

   b. (U) Emergency Action Procedures of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (EAP-JCS), Volume I - General (TOP SECRET).

3. (U) General. The Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff consists of seven LERTCONs which are divided into two subsystems, DEFENSE READINESS CONDITIONS (DEFCONs) and EMERGENCY CONDITIONS (EMERGCONs).

   a. (U) DEFCONs consist of five readiness conditions, with DEFCON 5 being the lowest and DEFCON 1 the highest.

   b. (U) EMERGCONs consist of two conditions, DEFENSE EMERGENCY and AIR DEFENSE EMERGENCY which has three attack warning conditions: RED, YELLOW, and WHITE.

4. (U) Applicability

   a. (U) The Alert System outlined in this manual is applicable to the commanders of the unified and specified commands and to the Commander, Joint Task Force, Alaska (when activated).

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

f. (U) Applicable DOD agencies should provide support as required by the particular situation.

5. (U) Responsibilities

a. (U) Pre-positioned Data. Commanders of the unified and specified commands will keep the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed of any changes in the planned actions necessary to increase the readiness of their commands, in consonance with each LERTCON as promulgated in the Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Part II, LERTCON Actions. This separate document includes:

(1) (U) Significant actions to be considered or taken upon declaration of each LERTCON which would be of interest to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and commanders of the unified and specified commands. These actions are listed in the following categories:

(a) (U) NCA Actions. Actions which must be considered/taken by the National Command Authorities.

(b) (U) JCS Actions. Actions which will be considered/taken by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(c) (U) CINC Actions Common. Actions which will be considered/taken by all or most of the unified and specified commands.

(d) (U) CINC Actions Unique. Actions which will be considered/taken by a particular unified or specified command.

(2) (U) The specific reference, i.e., OPLAN, OPORD, Fact Sheet, etc., which applies to each action.

(3) (U) The estimated average time required to complete each CINC UNIQUE action.

(4) (U) Related actions required of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or other commanders. This includes actions which may be triggered automatically by an action on the part of the commander submitting the list. This provides a means for the commanders of the unified and specified commands to indicate to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to lateral commanders the supporting actions that must be taken by others or supplementary decisions required of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when the commanders increase the readiness of their commands. Related actions pertaining to other alert systems (e.g., NATO, UNC/ROK-US CFC) may also be included.

b. (U) Reports. Reporting procedures for the Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are prescribed in Chapter Two.

6. (U) Distribution

a. (U) Command directives and changes thereto published by the commanders of the unified and specified commands, which pertain to the alert actions promulgated in the Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will be forwarded to addressees as follows:

(1) (U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff - 9.

(2) (U) The Services - one each.

(3) (U) The commanders of unified and specified commands - one each.

b. (U) The Services are requested to take action similar to subparagraph 6a above.

c. (U) An information copy of this document has been furnished to CINCNORAD; the Chief, US Mission, NATO; the US Representative to the Military Committee, NATO; the US National Military Representative to SHAPE; the US Liaison Officer to SACLANT; and the Director, Military Operations Center, National Defence Headquarters, Canada.

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CHAPTER TWO

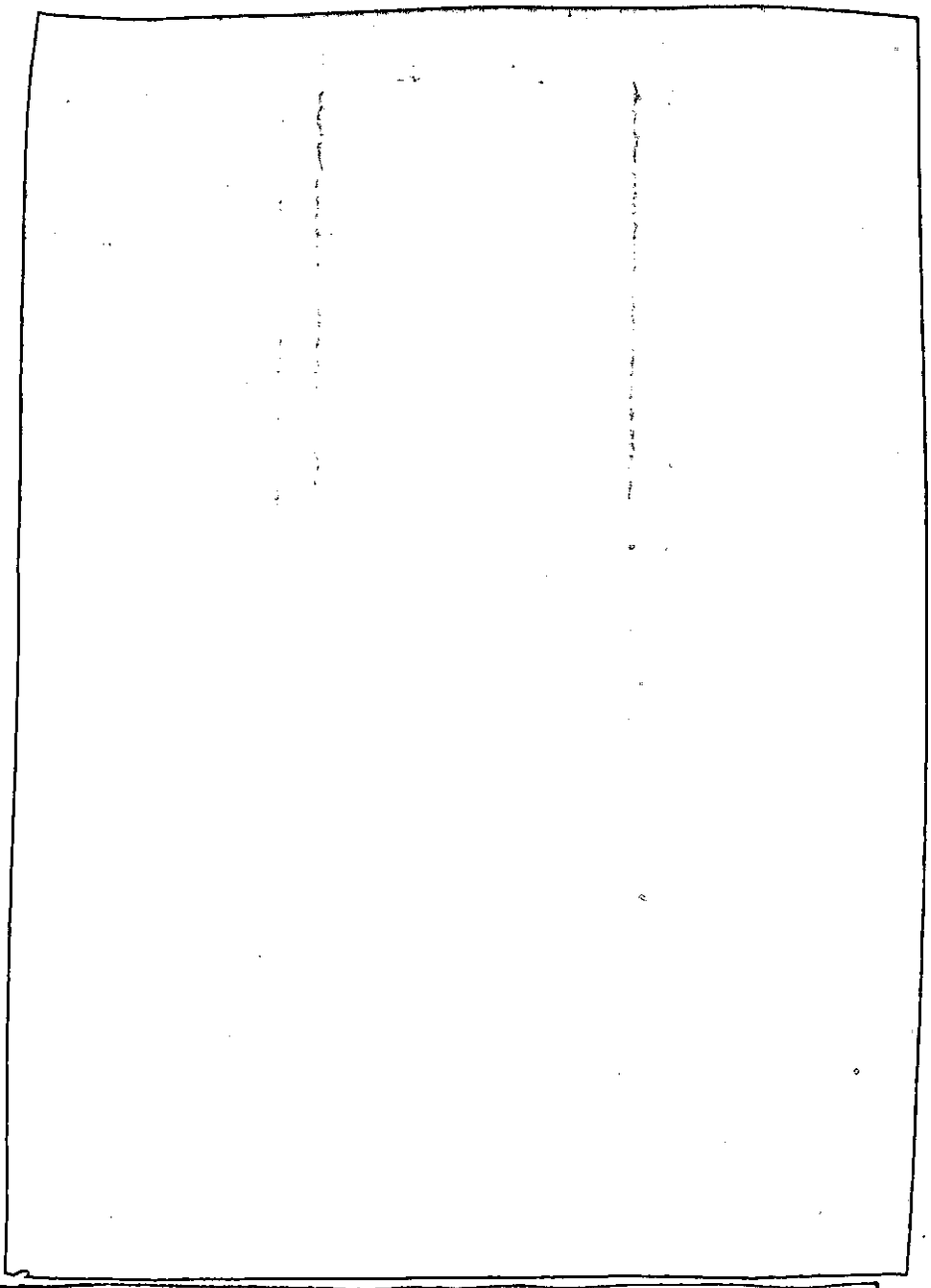
ALERT SYSTEM OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF (U)

1. (U) Concept

a. (U) The Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is designed for use in crisis management. It is adaptable to a full spectrum of crises--from general war and execution of the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) to operations and regional tensions in a limited area, with or without the use of nuclear weapons. It is intended to be used as a directive as well as an authorization for the commanders of the unified and specified commands to implement preplanned actions to increase force readiness which may include the execution of portions of some plans or entire plans during a particular alert condition (LERTCON). The attainment of a specific LERTCON does not indicate, in itself, the attainment of a specific level of combat readiness by a command, but rather that all actions considered appropriate have been completed which will bring a command up to a desired readiness in a time consistent with the existing situation and the LERTCON declared. Actual combat readiness will be reported and monitored as provided in the Joint Reporting Structure (JRS).

b. (U) Federal Civil Emergency Preparedness is managed under a separate system (Civil Readiness Levels and Warning Conditions) by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

2. (U) Objectives. The objectives of the Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are to:



3. (U) Character. The Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is designed to be used as a directive and an authorization as follows:

[redacted]

5. (U) Uniformity. To provide uniformity, all those actions which are COMMON to the commanders of all of the unified and specified commands have been identified for each LERTCON in Part II. During implementation, all commanders concerned normally would carry out the common actions declared, thereby providing a common or uniform worldwide base for monitoring readiness posture. However, the different missions of the individual commanders are recognized in the separate listing of actions UNIQUE to one or only some of the commanders.

6. (U) Authority to Declare

a. (U) DEFCONs 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and DEFENSE EMERGENCY. The Joint Chiefs of Staff or higher authority are authorized to declare all DEFCONs and DEFENSE EMERGENCY.

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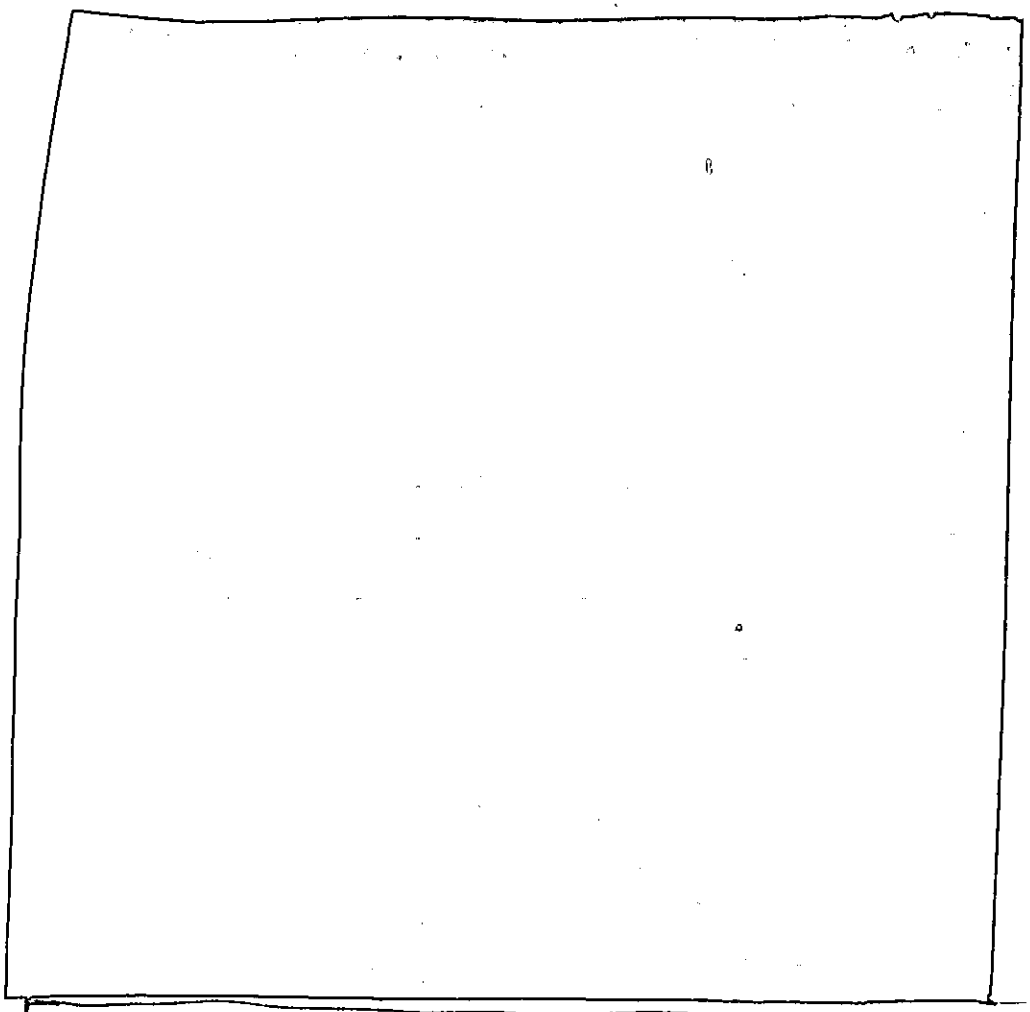


8. (U) Security

a. (U) General. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wish to emphasize the importance of effective security control measures associated with increasing the readiness of US Forces under actual or exercise conditions. It is desired that commanders of all unified and specified commands continue to impress on subordinate commanders the importance of maintaining security with particular emphasis on periods of heightened tensions and increased readiness.

b. (U) Timeliness of Declaration. The declaring authority should consider the security requirements, the reason for making the declaration, and the guidance to be issued when assessing the urgency of notification. In deference to both security and guidance, some degree of delay is acceptable in formally declaring DEFCON changes so that the declaring authority may provide commanders with accurate information on which to base any related considerations, decisions, and actions. Even under impending nuclear or general war, a slight delay in notification in order to include in the declaration the reason and some guidance is considered acceptable. If amplifying guidance is impractical initially, it should be provided as soon as practical thereafter.

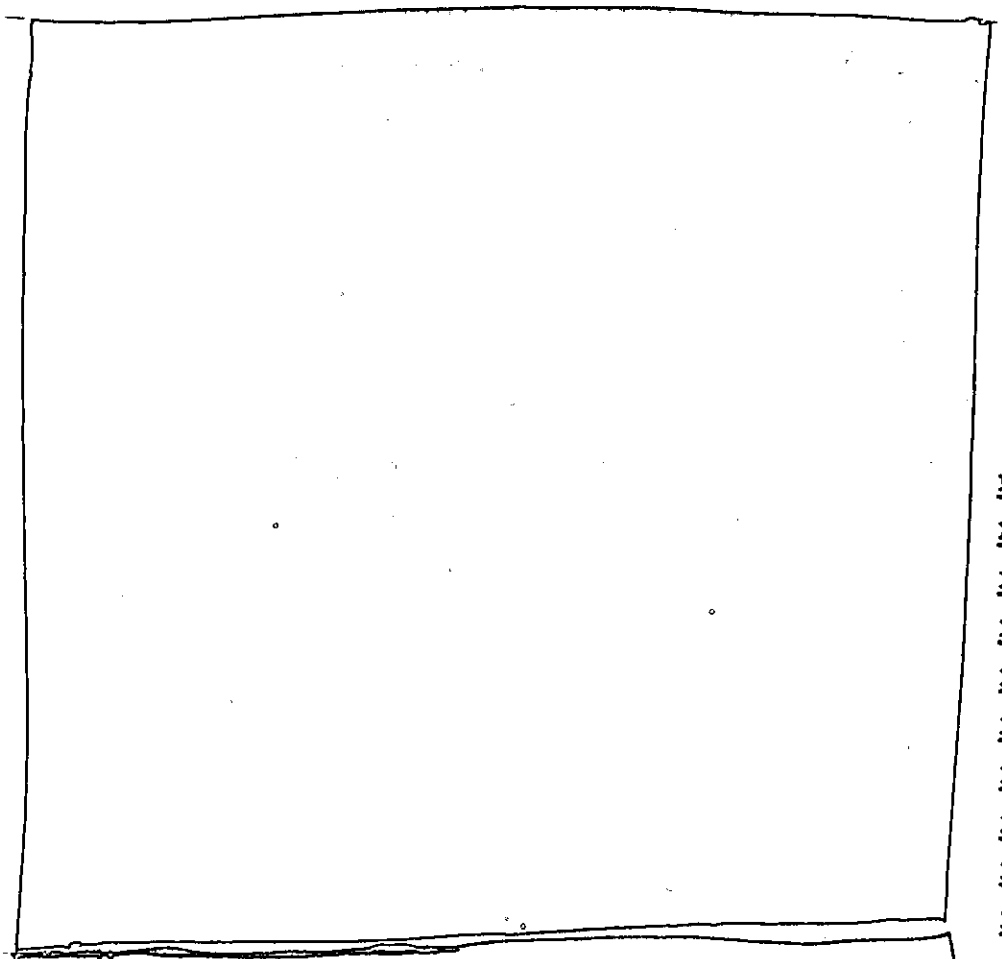
c. (U) Release of Information to Press and/or Public. Whenever an increased LERTCON is directed, the following guidance will apply:

(1) (U) Whenever possible, a basis for answering press queries will be provided concurrently with the LERTCON declaration.

(2) (U) If guidance is not provided, "RELEASE UNAUTHORIZED - PA GUIDANCE TO FOLLOW" will be used to answer all press and public queries.

(3) (U) Further public affairs guidance will be referred to/provided by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs).

[redacted]



e. (U) Classification. The following provides classification guidance:

(1) (U) UNCLASSIFIED

(a) (U) The terms DEFCON 1, 2, etc., or their exercise equivalents, when used alone; however, they will not be used in unclassified communications to announce a classified change in readiness.

(b) (U) The association of a DEFCON number or EMERGCON with the appropriate exercise term; e.g., DEFCON 3 - ROUND HOUSE or DEFENSE EMERGENCY - HOT BOX.

(c) (U) DEFENSE EMERGENCY and AIR DEFENSE EMERGENCY terms and situations.

(2) (U) CONFIDENTIAL. Review 20 years from date of classification, Reason: DOD 5200.1R, para 2-301c6.

(a) (U) The association of DEFCON numbers; e.g., DEFCON 3, or exercise terms, e.g., ROUND HOUSE, with the classified situations or descriptions for each DEFCON.

(b) (U) The association of DEFENSE EMERGENCY and AIR DEFENSE EMERGENCY, or exercise terms, with the classified description for each EMERGCON.

(3) (U) SECRET. Review 20 years from date of classification, Reason: DOD 5200.1R, para 2-301c6.

(a) (U) Unless otherwise directed, any reference to the fact that an actual or exercise change in readiness is being considered, is taking place, or has been accomplished.

(b) (U) The association of LERTCON codes or terms, whether actual or exercise, with specific actions listed in Part II.

(4) (U) LERTCON Action Checklists. The classification of LERTCON action checklists is a responsibility of the originator and will be classified according to content; however, applicable checklists should not be classified lower than CONFIDENTIAL.

[redacted]

g. (U) DEFCON Definitions. The following brief UNCLASSIFIED DEFCON definitions may be used:

(1) (U) DEFCON 5 - Normal readiness.

(2) (U) DEFCON 4 - Increased intelligence watch and strengthened security measures.

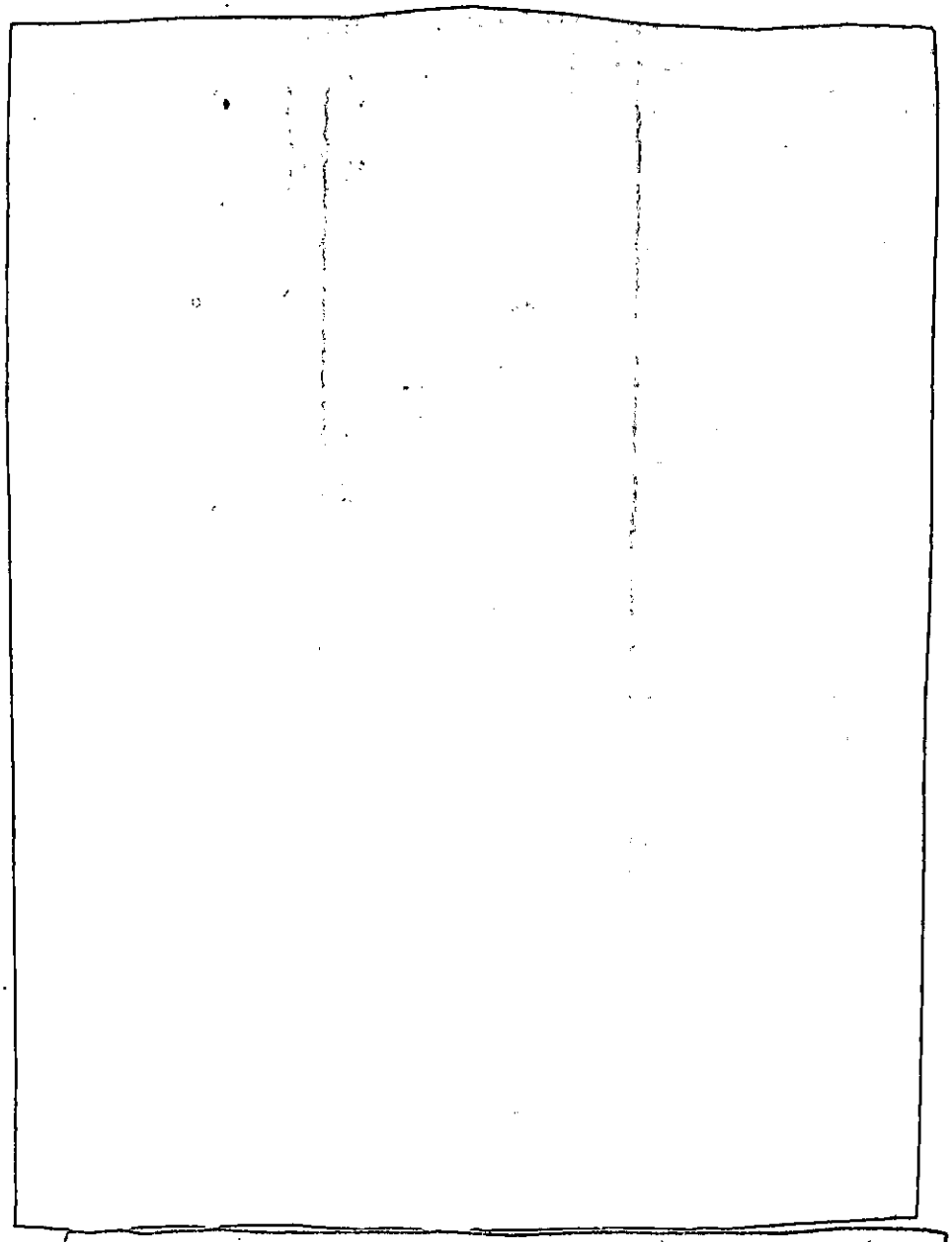
(3) (U) DEFCON 3 - An increase in force readiness above that required for normal readiness.

(4) (U) DEFCON 2 - A further increase in force readiness but less than maximum readiness.

(5) (U) DEFCON 1 - Maximum force readiness.

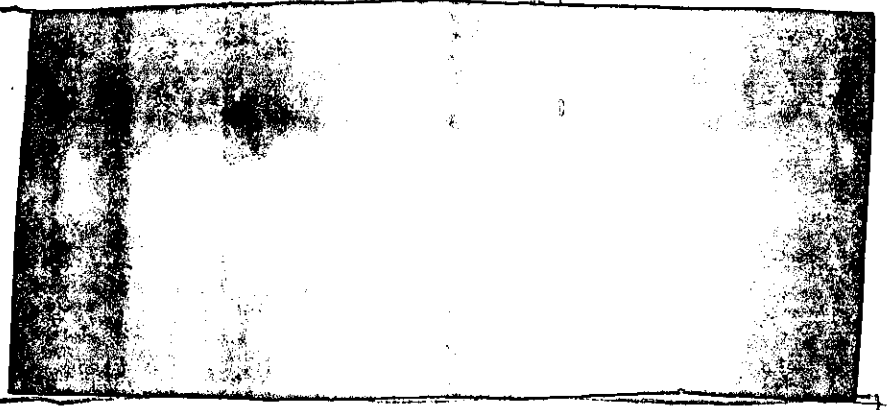
9. (U) Procedures

a. (U) General

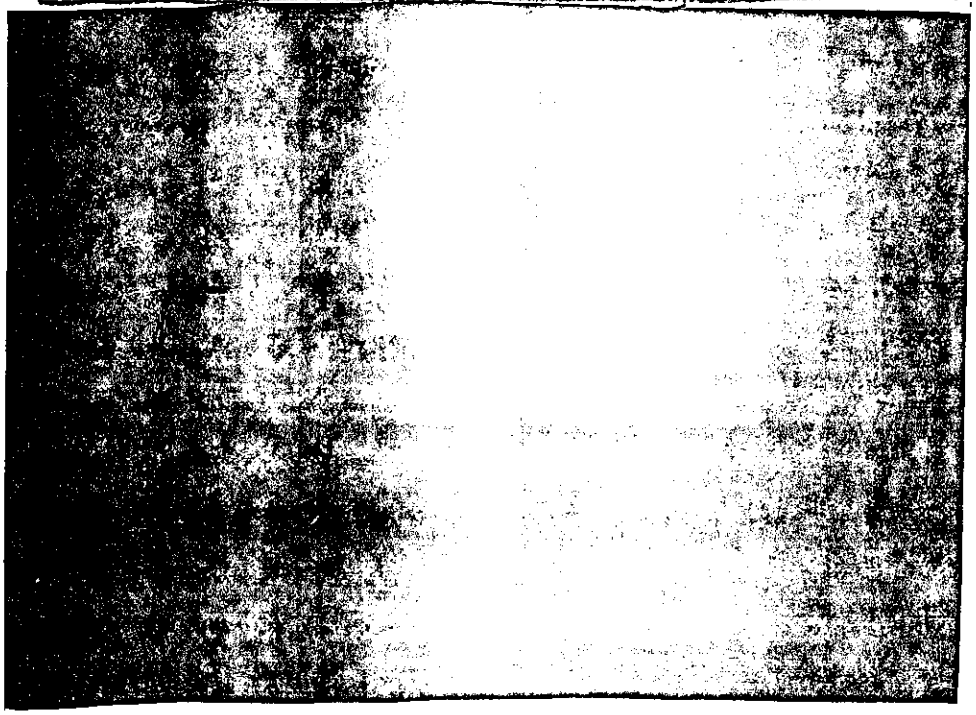


(3) (U) Declare implementation of one or more selected actions WITHOUT declaration of a specific LERTCON change.

c. (U) Canceling or Reducing LERTCONs



d. (U) Emergency Action Procedures. Detailed instructions regarding the format and transmission of alerting or emergency action and related messages and additional information related to declaring actions, follow-on actions, emergency conferences, and alert procedures are contained in Chapter 5 and in the Emergency Action Procedures of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Volume I, General.



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CHAPTER THREE

ALERT CONDITIONS (U)

1. (U) General. The Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff consists of seven alert conditions (LERTCONs) which are divided into two subsystems, DEFCONs and EMERGENCY CONDITIONS (EMERGCONs), as follows:

a. (U) DEFCONs consisting of five readiness conditions, with DEFCON 5 being the lowest and DEFCON 1 the highest.

b. (U) EMERGCONs consisting of two conditions:

(1) (U) DEFENSE EMERGENCY.

(2) (U) AIR DEFENSE EMERGENCY consisting of three attack warning conditions: Air Defense Warning RED; Air Defense Warning YELLOW; and Air Defense Warning WHITE.

[redacted]

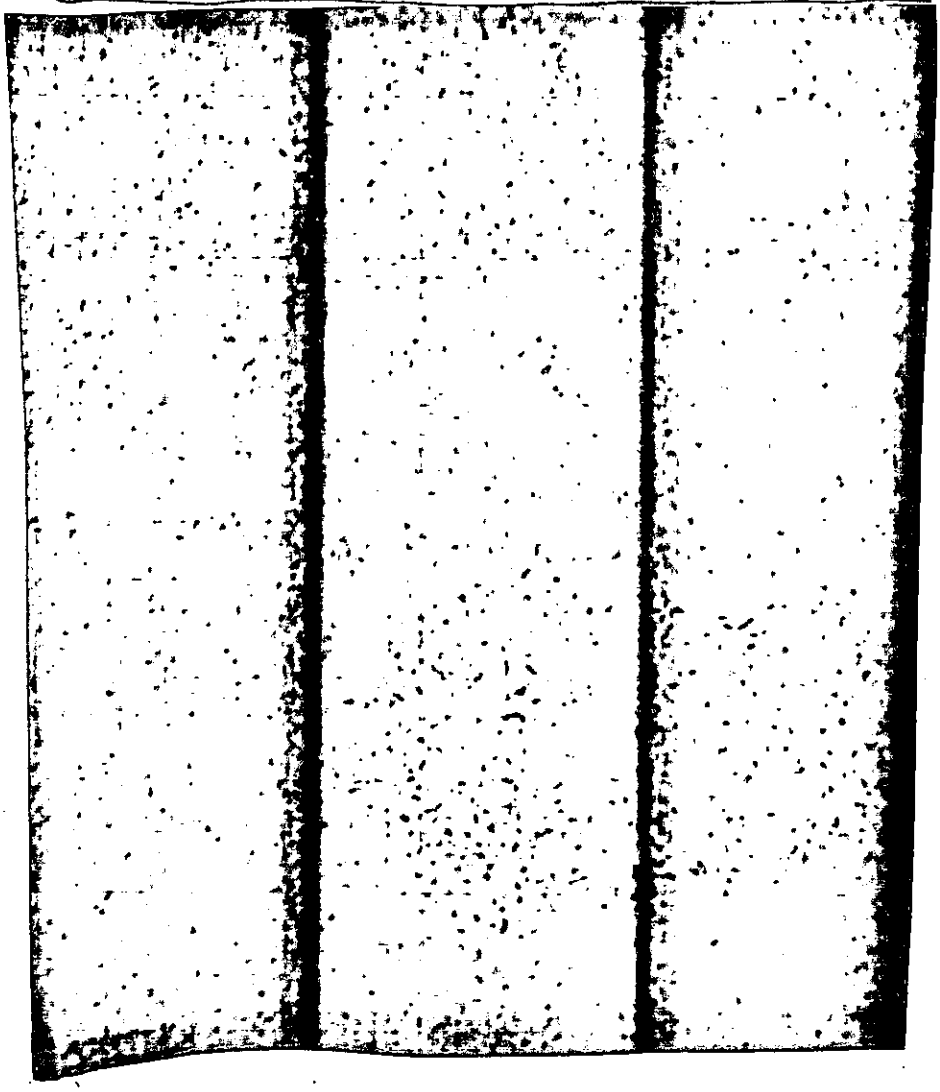
a. (U) DEPENSE EMERGENCY - (Exercise Term: "HOT BOX").

(1) (U) SITUATION: An DEFENSE EMERGENCY exists when:

[redacted]

[redacted]

b. (U) AIR DEFENSE EMERGENCY - (Exercise Term: "BIG NOISE").



(3) (U) Air Defense Warning Conditions. Concurrent with the declaration of an AIR DEFENSE EMERGENCY, imminence of attack will be specified by one of the following conditions:

(a) (U) Air Defense Warning RED - (Exercise Term: "APPLE JACK"). Attack by hostile aircraft/missiles is imminent or taking place.

(b) (U) Air Defense Warning YELLOW - (Exercise Term: "LEMON JUICE"). Attack by hostile aircraft/missiles is probable.

(c) (U) Air Defense Warning WHITE - (Exercise Term: "SNOW MAN"). Attack by hostile aircraft/missiles is not considered immediately probable or imminent.

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CHAPTER FOUR

EXERCISES (U)

[redacted]

2. (U) Purpose. The purpose of these exercises is:

[redacted]

4. (U) Security and Classification. See Chapter Two, paragraph 8.

5. (U) Release of Information. See Chapter Two, paragraph 8.

6. (U) Visibility. See Chapter Two, paragraph 8.

[redacted]

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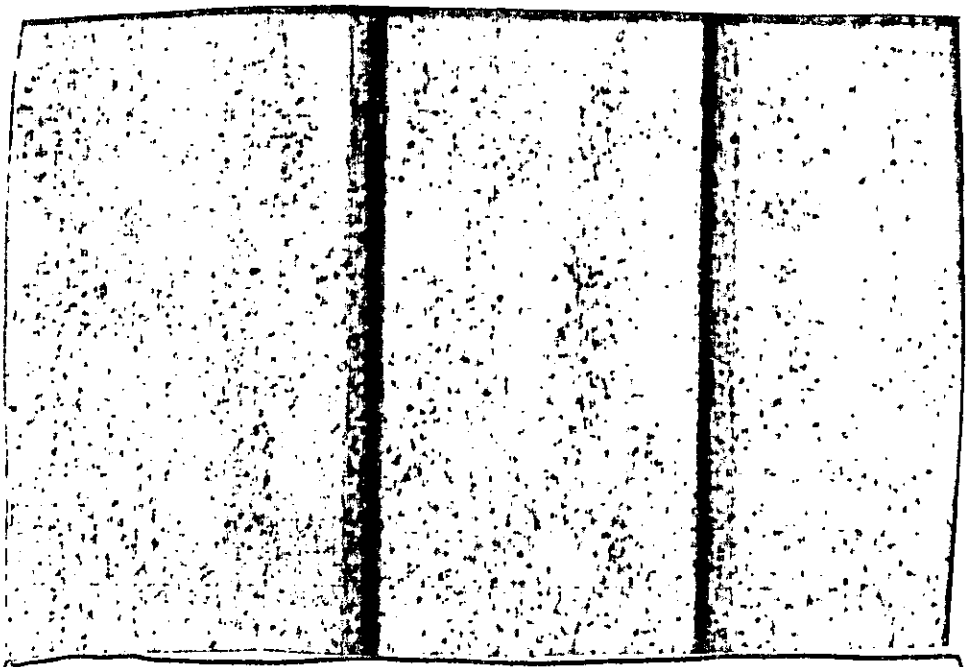
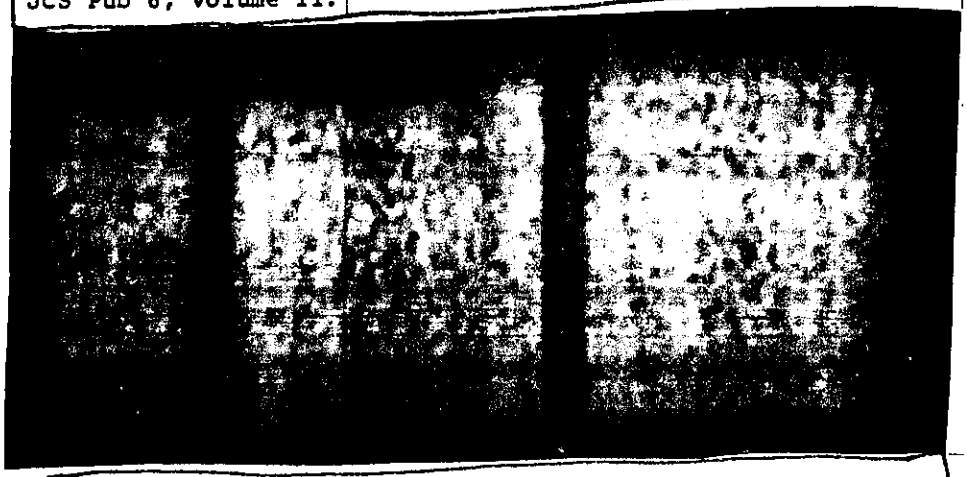


9. (U) Exercise Messages. Detailed instructions regarding the format and transmission of exercise messages are contained in Chapter 5 and in the Emergency Action Procedures of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Volume I, General.

10. (U) Exercise Terms. An exercise term is a combination of two unclassified words used exclusively to designate a test, drill, or exercise. An exercise term is employed to preclude the possibility of confusing exercise directives with actual operations directives. The following UNCLASSIFIED exercise terms and meanings are assigned:

Alert Condition	Exercise Term
DEFCON 5	FADE OUT
DEFCON 4	DOUBLE TAKE
DEFCON 3	ROUND HOUSE
DEFCON 2	FAST PACE
DEFCON 1	COCKED PISTOL
DEFENSE EMERGENCY	HOT.BOX
AIR DEFENSE EMERGENCY	BIG NOISE
AIR DEFENSE WARNING RED	APPLE JACK
AIR DEFENSE WARNING YELLOW	LEMON JUICE
AIR DEFENSE WARNING WHITE	SNOW MAN

11. (U) Use of Exercise Terms. Exercise terms will be used to direct tests or exercises conducted to increase or simulate an increase in readiness posture for training purposes. The user of nonsecure circuits must insure that the use of exercise terms does not disclose classified information. (See Chapter Two, paragraph 8.) The composition and use of exercise terms will not conflict with the nickname/code word policy and procedures contained in DOD Directive 5200.1 and JCS Pub 6, Volume II.



a. (U) Declaration Report. Same as actual. See Chapter Two, paragraph 10.

b. (U) LERTCON STATUS OF ACTIONS REPORT. See Chapter Two, paragraph 10.

(1) (U) Exceptions. Same as actual. See Chapter Two, paragraph 10.

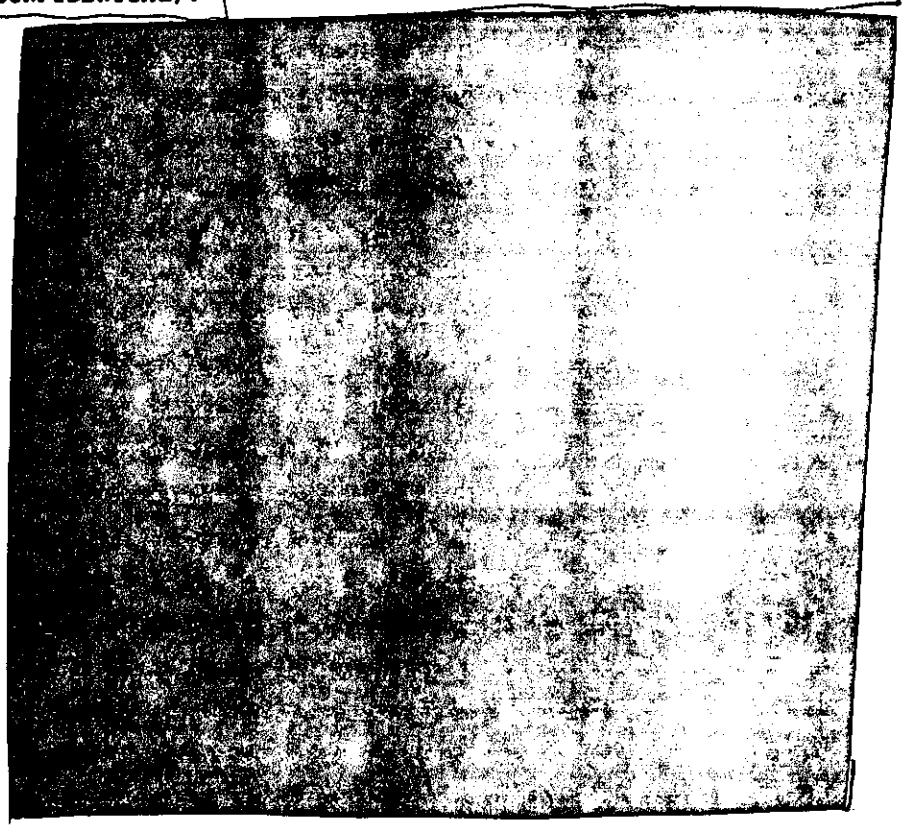
(2) (U) Deviations. Same as actual. See Chapter Two, paragraph 10. Make this report only if it is required on an action actually carried out.

(3) (U) Attainment Progress. Since command readiness CPXs usually are of short duration, this report will be

made no later than 6 hours AFTER a commander executes the exercise. Report is same as actual. See Chapter Two, paragraph 10.

(4) (U) Final Attainment. Same as actual report EXCEPT that the exercise term will be used in describing attainment; i.e., ATTAINED CONDITION ROUND HOUSE. See Chapter Two, paragraph 10.

c. (U) Exercise Summary. Upon completion of a command readiness CPX and when all data has been obtained (normally within 24 hours), the following information will be provided in the format indicated (individual items are UNCLASSIFIED but entire format is CONFIDENTIAL, and when filled in, all entries will be classified at least CONFIDENTIAL):



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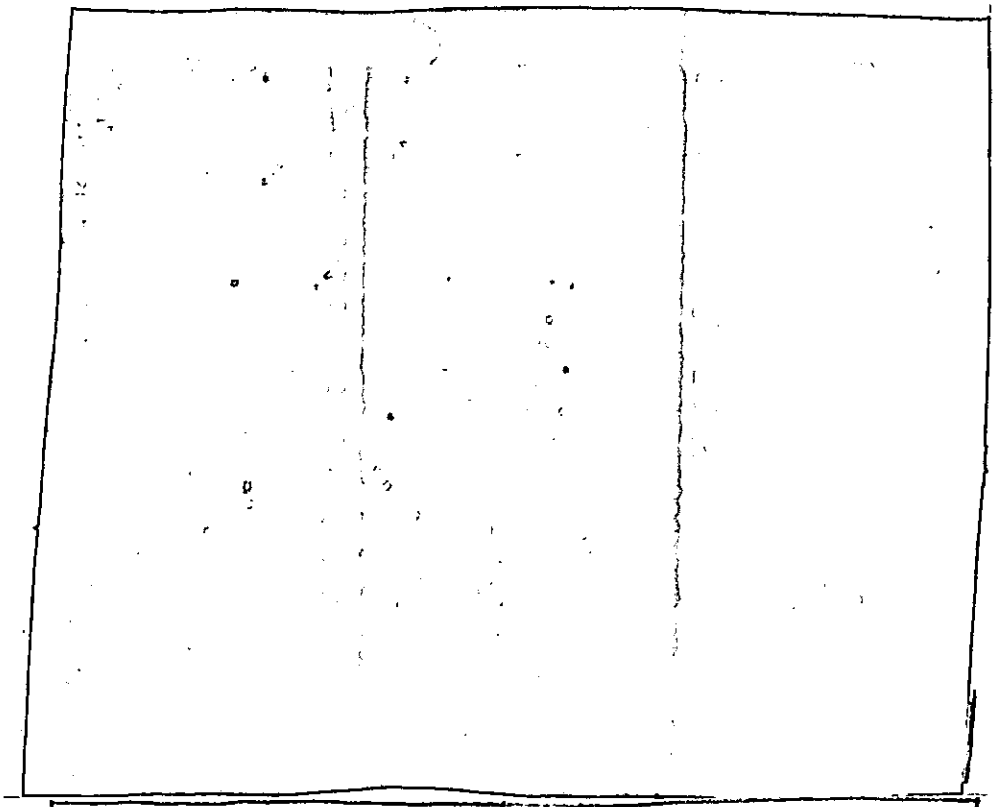
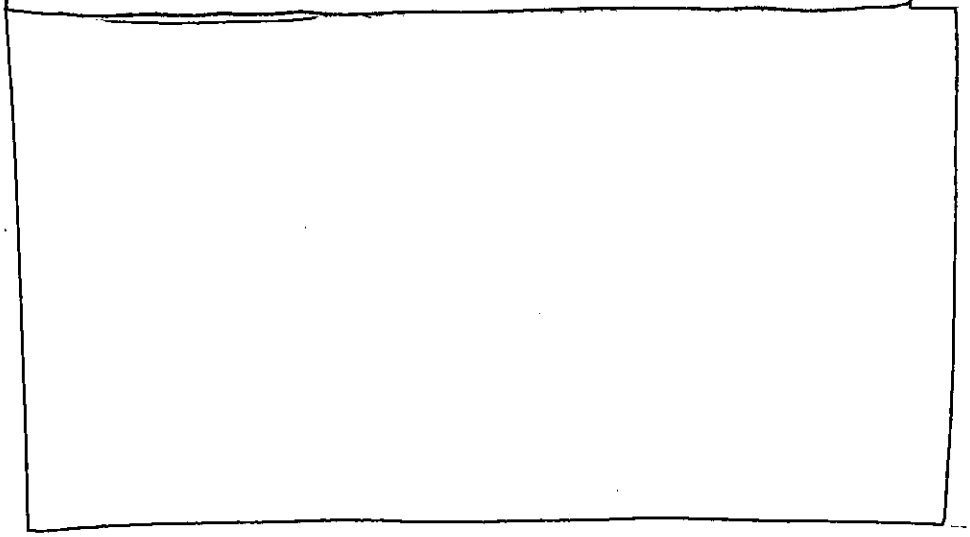
CHAPTER 5

ALERT AND PREPARATION MESSAGES (U)



(1) (U) Remarks. Remarks would be appropriate if there were any special instructions or actions to be taken or avoided. This section may also include any additional instructions on the alert condition implementation.



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CHAPTER SIX

FACT SHEETS

1. General. Fact sheets provide additional information on JCS, CINC COMMON, and CINC UNIQUE Actions promulgated in Part II of the JCS Alert System.

2. Purpose. Fact sheets are designed to provide supporting information on each LERTCON action to assist decisionmakers when considering or responding to a request to increase the alert condition of US Forces. A fact sheet should be prepared for each action that may require additional information or amplification to properly portray what occurs when the action is implemented. Fact sheets are considered part of the JCS Alert System and will be programmed into the LERTCON Actions Data Base - WWMCCS when the Data Base is completed. Fact sheets should also be distributed by commands as hard copy printouts. A sample format for fact sheets is provided at Figure 6-1.

3. Preparation of Fact Sheets

a. JCS Action fact sheets are prepared and maintained for each JCS LERTCON action by the staff agency assigned primary responsibility. They provide information essential to understanding and implementing the particular action. All other supporting information is referenced in the fact sheet. Tabs are only used where example memorandums or sample implementers are appropriate. Fact sheets are submitted to the Chief, Emergency Actions Division, Operations Directorate, J-3, OJCS, semiannually NLT 15 March and 15 September in two copies, dated and labeled "Working Paper."

b. CINC COMMON Action fact sheets are prepared and maintained by the Emergency Actions Division, Operations Directorate, J-3, OJCS. They will be reviewed annually NLT 1 September, to be effective 1 October. CINC COMMON fact sheets will not be considered "working papers."

c. CINC UNIQUE Action fact sheets are prepared and maintained by the unified and specified commands. They should be limited to one page and contain sufficient information to provide a meaningful description of the action being implemented by the command. UNIQUE Action fact sheets should be reviewed annually and forwarded to Emergency Actions Division, Operations Directorate, J-3, OJCS, NLT 1 September, to be effective 1 October. CINC UNIQUE fact sheets will not be considered "working papers."

4. Contents. The requirement for fact sheets is satisfied only if they constitute a brief digest of policy, legislation, and cardinal procedures common to any situation. Therefore, all current and proposed fact sheets should be subjected to a critical review to insure their value and utility.

WORKING PAPER DATE

JCS FACT SHEET

1. Fact Sheet: #

2. Identifier: (Alphanumeric Code)

3. Title: (As noted in JCS Alert System)

4. Action: (Description/digest of pertinent information relevant to the action they support.)

5. Time required to accomplish:

6. Proponent: (Responsible headquarters, agency, staff, etc.)

7. Remarks: (Additional comments/instructions for implementation)

8. References:

a.

b.

c.

* Classification of fact sheet determined by contents.

Declassification Instructions

Figure 6-1

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CHAPTER SEVEN

PART II - LERTCON ACTIONS (U)

1. (U) Purpose. The purpose of Part II - LERTCON Actions is to provide a compilation of the actions to be taken or considered by the National Command Authorities, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the commanders of unified and specified commands for each alert condition (LERTCON), in order to keep all concerned appraised of the ongoing actions during crisis or emergency situations.

[redacted]

a. (U) Actions by the Joint Chiefs of Staff common to all LERTCONS.

b. (U) Actions taken or considered at each separate LERTCON:

(1) (U) By the National Command Authorities.

(2) (U) By the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(3) (U) By all CINCs in common (CINC Common Actions).

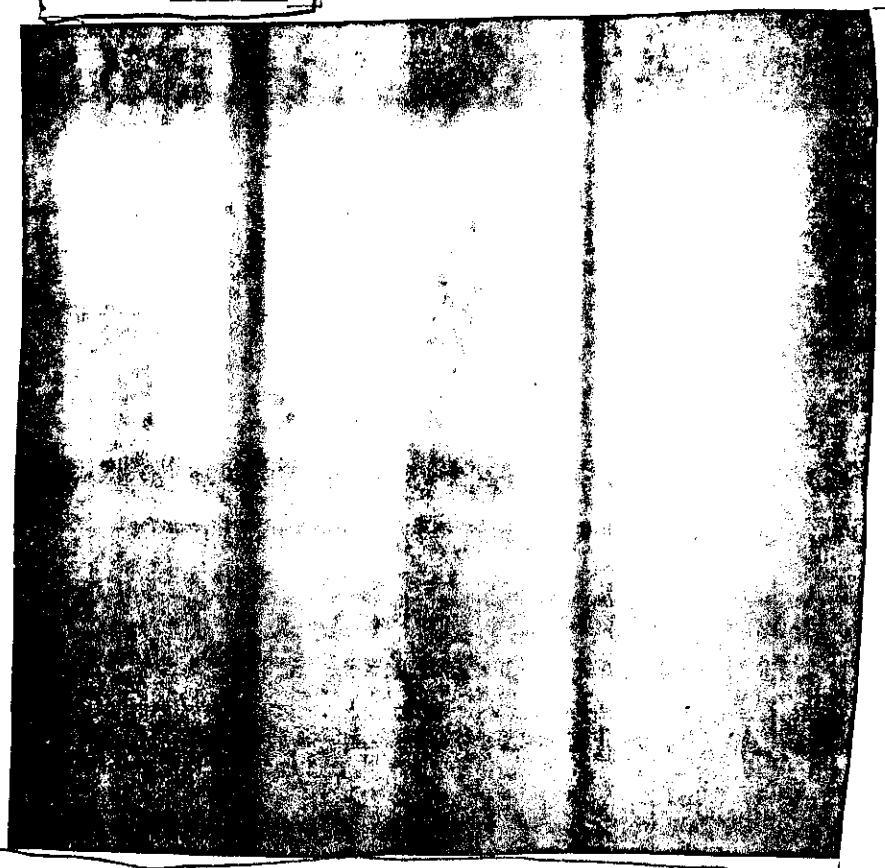
(4) (U) By each CINC not in common (CINC Unique Actions).

[redacted]

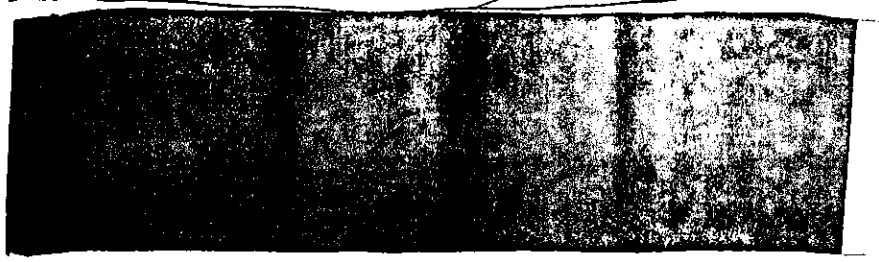
3. (U) Format. Individual LERTCON actions as described in 2a and b above will be represented in Part II with the following information elements:

a. (U) ACTION CODE - Each action is identified by a combination alphanumeric code to provide a means for unclassified reference to specific actions and to simplify message traffic, e.g., CAD4, 42L14.

(6) (U) Examples



b. (U) ACTION DESCRIPTION - Narrative description of the action to be performed.



[redacted]

4. (U) Security Classification. The security classification of Part II is "SECRET." Each individual LERTCON action is "SECRET."

5. (U) Part II Updates. Unified and specified commands and the OJCS will prepare and submit changes to their respective LERTCON actions as significant changes occur. An annual review of the LERTCON system will be conducted and changes or recommendations submitted by 1 September. Changes and recommendations should be submitted to the Director for Operations, Joint Staff, Attn: Emergency Actions Division.

[redacted]

COPY NO. 182-A

ALERT SYSTEM OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

PART II LERTCON ACTIONS (U)

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30 December 1985

FIRST NOTE TO HOLDERS OF

MJCS 64-85

ALERT SYSTEM OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF,
PART II, "LERTCON ACTIONS"

1. Holders are requested to take the following action:

Remove pages	Replace with
2-1 through 2-6	2-1 through 2-5
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4-1 through 4-7	4-1 through 4-7
9-1 through 9-5	9-1 through 9-6
12-1 through 12-2	12-1 through 12-2

2. This change is effective 15 Jan 86.

3. After posting this change, file these instructions in front of the document.

R. W. TOPEL
Military Secretary

Attachments
a/s

UNCLASSIFIED WITHOUT ATTACHMENTS

[redacted]

[redacted]

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

MJCS-64-85
26 April 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: SEE DISTRIBUTION

Subject: Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Part II, "LERTCON Actions"

1. This is a revision of the Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Part II, "LERTCON Actions."

2. This memorandum, together with the Appendix, supersedes SM 165-81* and will become effective 150001Z May 85.

3. This memorandum is addressed to Commander, Alaskan Air Command, for Joint Task Force Alaska when activated.

4. Without attachment, this memorandum is UNCLASSIFIED.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

H. HARDISTY
Vice Admiral, USN
Director For Operations

Enclosure

Reference:
* SM 165-81, 4 March 1981, Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Part II, "LERTCON Actions"

[redacted]

[redacted]

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ALERT SYSTEM OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL (U)

1. (U) Purpose. The purpose of Part II, "LERTCON Actions," is to provide a compilation of the actions to be taken or considered by the National Command Authorities (NCA), the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the commanders of unified and specified commands for each alert condition (LERTCON) in order to keep all concerned apprised of the ongoing actions during crises or emergency situations.

2. (U) References. Close familiarity with the following documents is considered essential to understand the LERTCON system:

a. (U) Alert System of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Part I, "Concept (U)": The basic document of the Alert System that outlines policy and procedures.

b. (U) Emergency Action Procedures of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (EAP-JCS), Volume I, "General (U)" (TOP SECRET): Prescribes procedures used to direct an increase in readiness conditions.

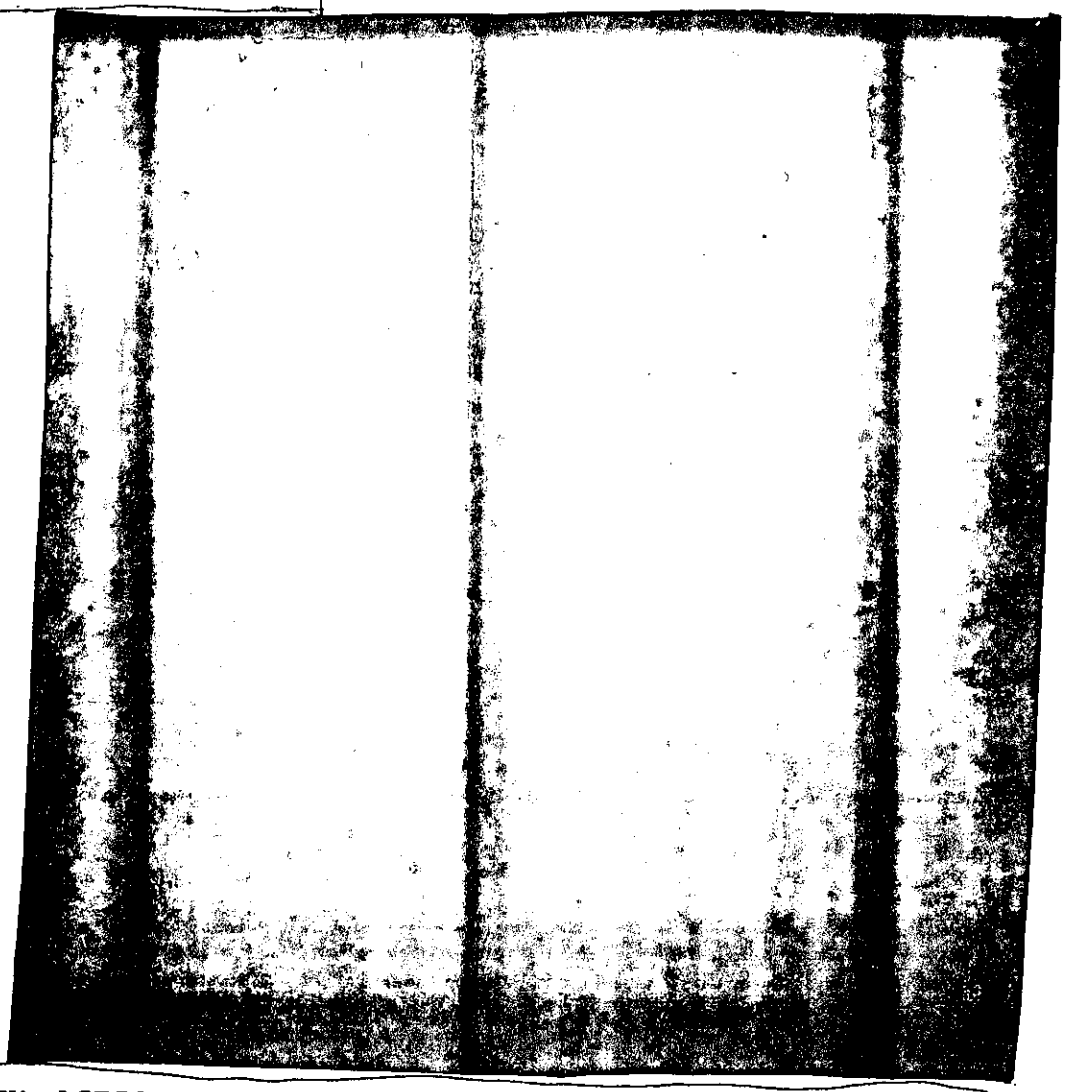
c. (U) Continuity of Operations Plan for the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (COOP): Plans for

continuity of operations of the OJCS in order to support the NCA in their direction of the US Armed Forces.

4. (U) Format. Each LERTCON action consists of an ACTION CODE, ACTION DESCRIPTION, REFERENCES, and REMARKS.

a. (U) ACTION CODE - Each action is identified by an alphanumeric code to provide a means for unclassified reference and to simplify message traffic; e.g., CAD4, 42L14.

(6) (U) Examples



b. (U) ACTION DESCRIPTION - Narrative description of the action to be performed.

[redacted]

[redacted]

5. (U) Security Classification. The security classification of Part II is SECRET. Each individual LERTCON action is SECRET.

6. (U) Part II Updates. Unified and specified commands and the OJCS will prepare and submit changes to their respective LERTCON actions as significant changes occur. An annual review of the LERTCON system will be conducted and changes or recommendations submitted by 1 June. CINCs should enter changes to CINC-unique actions directly into the Alert System data base, which is stored on the Worldwide Military Command and Control System (WWMCCS) Computer System host computer at the ANMCC. Other changes and recommendations should be sent to the Deputy Director for Operations (National Military Command System), Command and Control Division. (AUTODIN address is JCS WASHINGTON DC//J36/CCD//.)