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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20508CONFIDENTIAL

March 31, 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR CHARLES E. ALLEN
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

SUBJECT: NOIWON Modernization (C)

The White House Situation Support Staff believes it is essential to upgrade NOIWON capability. Although the current NOIWON is used extensively, it suffers some drawbacks in terms of voice quality and reliability. In addition, since the system is entirely manual, it is cumbersome to use and does not readily permit expansion to other conferees. (C)

Our staff believes that most of the requirements identified in the 1983 study are still valid. In terms of priority, we believe these requirements are:

- a. Reliability: The system must be able to conference all participants on the first attempt. Several times in the recent past, for example, the secure operator was required to terminate a NOIWON conference before any information was exchanged due to inability to bring one or more conferees into the net.
- b. Timeliness: The current time-lag between the decision to initiate a conference and full participation is generally adequate, even though the system is entirely manual. Using the latest technology (e.g., automatic switching telephones) should result in an improvement in this timeliness.
- c. Voice Quality: All participants must be able to communicate in a "five by five" mode in terms of readability and strength. Many times readability is acceptable, but signal strength is so low that conferees have difficulty hearing a speaker.
- d. Expandability: We believe the current ten drops should be maintained as the "core" of the NOIWON, but that the system should have a capability for automatic expansion to other specifically-designated operations

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centers in the Washington DC area. This would allow a conference originator to rapidly include other participants (e.g., FAA for hijackings, DOE for nuclear incidents, etc.) should the need arise. This expandable capability is especially important in light of the newly-established National System for Emergency Coordination, which outlines procedures for managing domestic emergencies, many of which have national-security impact.

- e. Display indicator: All instruments should be equipped with a display panel which indicates when a conferee is off-hook. Standard operating procedure should dictate that an off-hook indicator means that a conference participant is in the net and ready to copy. This will obviate the requirement to perform a verbal, and often time-consuming, communications check at the start of every conference.
- f. Push-to-talk Handsets: These are absolutely essential for all instruments tied into the NOIWON. In many cases, the amount of background noise and conversations during NOIWONs makes it difficult to conduct an effective conference. Using push-to-talk handsets would eliminate much of this problem and improve the overall quality of the conference.
- g. Recording capability: While this capability is not essential, we believe it would be useful to design the system to allow recording in the event participants so desired. (C)

The following comments concerning other aspects of the NOIWON are provided for your consideration:

- a. Additional modes: The WHSSS does not believe that any modes -- other than voice -- are necessary for the NOIWON. If conferees require exchange of video data, the Secure Video Teleconferencing System (SVTS) provides this capability, albeit at a slower reaction time than the NOIWON. Similarly, a timely and reliable secure facsimile is available using the WASHFAX system.
- b. Speaker phones: The WHSSS does not recommend that any instruments be equipped with speaker phones, given the problems that already exist with background noise. If some subscribers desire a speaker phone capability, the speaker phone should be used only to monitor the NOIWON, with a push-to-talk handset used as the transmitter (i.e., no open microphones). (C)

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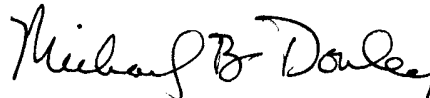
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In summary, we believe the strength and utility of the NOIWON resides in its overall reliability, simplicity, and timeliness; these are the qualities that must be emphasized in any future system. Using programmable digital secure switches, as outlined in your 25 March 88 memorandum, should enhance the latter two qualities. Any system procured, however, must be thoroughly tested to ensure it is at least as reliable as the current system. (C)

Regardless of what specific system is procured, two elements must be thoroughly considered. First, a strict set of operating guidelines must be promulgated. Absent such guidelines, a NOIWON can rapidly degenerate into confusion, which eliminates any benefit derived from the system. Second, consideration must be given to a dedicated maintenance system, where all subscribers can obtain responsive technical assistance in the event of problems. (C)



Michael B. Donley
Deputy Executive Secretary
for Situation Support

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