



(C) In a Nutshell: Defense Watch Conditions (WATCHCONS)

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• (C) WATCHCONS: What Are They?

(C) Watch Conditions (WATCHCON) are a key feature of the Defense Indications & Warning System (DIWS), whose goal is to provide senior civilian and military decision-makers the **earliest possible "strategic warning" of foreign geopolitical/military developments which might adversely impact U.S. or Allied interests, and which therefore may require policy decisions or actions.** DIWS operates under the auspices of the Director, DIA, and Principal Members include DIA, the Unified Commands and USFK; NSA is a very active Associate Member.

• (C) How Do WATCHCONS Work?

(S) A DIWS member first establishes and defines a specific geopolitical/military Warning Problem to highlight a developing Force-on-Force or Low Intensity Conflict issue. Participating members then monitor this pre-defined Problem and periodically issue warning reports to policymakers in the form of **Defense WATCHCON Change Reports.** These reports employ a series of five WATCHCON levels (see box) to express a participating organization's "degree of concern," as well as an assessment of the situation and perhaps a statement of the warning time available.

(C) WATCHCON Levels and Definitions

WATCHCON I (IMMINENT CRISIS/ CRISIS)

- There is an imminent crisis or an actual crisis.
- There is a clear and immediate threat.
- There may be no additional warning time.
- The maximum available intelligence resources should be allocated to manage this Warning Problem.

WATCHCON II (PROBABLE CRISIS)

- There is a significant threat leading to a probable crisis.
- Warning time may be limited.
- Resource managers should consider allocating additional intelligence resources to this Warning Problem.

WATCHCON III (POTENTIAL CRISIS)

- There is an increased threat and a potential crisis.
- Warning time may start to become a

constraining factor.

WATCHCON IV (ENVIRONMENT FOR CRISIS)

- There is an environment for the development of a crisis.
- There is an identifiable potential threat in its early development or latent phase.

WATCHCON V (NO ACTIVE PROBLEM/NORMAL POSTURE)

- There is no active Warning Problem for the country or region.
- The country or region is being monitored on a normal peacetime basis.

(S) **Note that the definitions and scope of these Warning Problems vary considerably and are not influenced by how important any given regional/ topical target may be in the broader spectrum of U.S. political/military interests.** The Russia/Georgia Warning Problem, for example, addresses only "Russian military action in Georgia," while the Egypt Internal Warning Problem is focused on "political instability and civil unrest;" neither Warning Problem attempts to delve into broader issues regarding these targets which may also be of interest to our intelligence consumers. Note, too, that while there is no **direct** connection between a change in WATCHCON level and the allocation of collection or analytic resources, WATCHCON levels I and II should prompt resource managers to consider whether their organization's current level of effort is still appropriate.

• (C) **The Timing of WATCHCON Reports**

(C) There are two main factors which influence the timing of WATCHCON Change Reports: geopolitical/military circumstances which raise or lower a DIWS member's "degree of concern," thereby warranting an adjustment of the WATCHCON level, or the need to replace outdated WATCHCON assessments.

• (U) **What's Your Role?**

(C) NSA's active participation in DIWS is spearheaded by the SIGINT National Intelligence Officer (**SINIO**) **for Warning**, who researches, drafts, coordinates and releases all NSA/CSS WATCHCON Change Reports. SINIO/Warning routinely **engages relevant SINIO and TOPI (Target Office of Primary Interest) elements in this process.** They play a key role by providing the necessary depth of expertise, and ultimately are responsible for determining/approving the proposed WATCHCON level and assessment. Also, they may initiate the production of a WATCHCON Change Report, based on their understanding of new developments.

(C) A complete listing of NSA's WATCHCON postures, more information on SINIO/Warning activities, and links to the DIWS and the National Intelligence Warning System (NIWS) web pages are available on the web:

NSAnet:

[REDACTED]

INTELINK:

[REDACTED]

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