

## ДЕФКОН

By Jonathan Calinski

At exactly 4:03 am Comrade Lyosha once again was reminded that every second some trigger-happy American general with a big-ass red button could blow him up and all that was dear to him. Except this time, he wasn't reminded through horror stories of his fellow soldiers or existential dread, but the loud shrilling warning signals of the new, very expensive long wave rocket detection radar system that he recently had been stationed to.

After realizing that he wasn't dreaming anymore and that in fact, shit was about to go down, he stood up just to realize that he was still sitting in front the radar control. He then was reminded of another thing, namely that he usually wasn't alone in the control room but contrary to his first enlightenment of this shift, it was an empty metal folding chair which was usually filled by Comrade Seryozha, a young, also trigger-happy private.

The where-he-was-question answered itself exactly 2.43 seconds later when Lyosha heard the flushing of a toilet from the rear-left corner of the room and the hastily clinging of an aluminum standard-issue military belt buckle and the loud screaming unnecessary heavy sound their toilet door. Due to him not directly sitting in front of it, comrade Seryozha actually had the chance to run to the interface, when it still was just about 2 meters of distance he had to cover. It took them both another few seconds to order their thoughts and come up with a conclusion.

"What if this is just an error in the system?", Lyosha said trying to get the thought of nuclear annihilation out of his head. He wasn't even fully convinced of what he had just said, but it was the only way he was able to not completely freak out and directly call supervisor Kirill and request him to launch a direct counter strike against the United States.

"Don't be stupid, this is the newest and best technology our country, nay, the world has to offer. A mistake is so improbable that we should contact the officer as soon as possible!" answered Seryozha nervously.

They were silent again for another short period of time. The green dot on the radar slowly moved towards them. Even though it was only slowly advancing, their dread grew exponentially with every time that long line completed another lap. The first person to talk again was comrade Seryozha

"I really think we should at least call the officer and tell them to come over, just to take a look at the situation.",

"No! Don't get any high-ranking officials involved, they always try to accelerate these conflicts, because they are convinced, they could win, though they can't and won't realize there is no winner in war!", unlike the private, who basically sleeps with a gun under his pillow and a knife in his hand, Lyosha hated conflicts. That was also the reason why he was stationed at the rocket surveillance station, where he still could protect his country but, was far away from the wars that raged in this world. Seryozha simply had no other choice but to go to the radar operating unit, due to his mother's concern for his safety. By now the green dot, that may or may not have been an LGM-118-Peacekeeper-intercontinental-ballistic-nuclear-missile had reached the second of seven distance measure marks on the radar display.

“We need to act now Comrade!”, you could hear the immense fear in the private’s agitated voice, as clearly as the loud warning sounds, that seemed to become more penetrant with every moment that passed.

“Be quiet, I need to think!” But Lyosha couldn’t think straight for the sake of it. “There must be a reason for all of this”, he reassured himself, “Even Americans are smart enough to not launch a nuke out of the blue against the most powerful nation in the world.”

As the green dot on the radar was about to pass the second distance indicator line, Seryozha finally decided to act, as he tried to grab the phone, that was installed directly next to the radar display. His superior’s hand firmly gripped his wrist, just before he could touch the phone.

“Do I need to remind you, that you are to only, and I strictly say ONLY act in such ways, when I explicitly tell you to do so, Private? I could easily get you punished for this!”

The soldier’s voice was now nearly as loud as the alarm. He knew this was technically only a minor offense, that most people wouldn’t even punish, but in this particular moment, that phone call could be the difference between life or death of millions or even billions of people through nuclear warfare. “I need to make this call or we will all die! Don’t you get it? This is a real threat, this system cannot fail!”

To say the Private was on the verge of tears would be a massive understatement.

“Comrade Seryozha, step back or I will have you court-marshalled! I am 100% sure this is a mistake. The engineers probably didn’t tweak the settings quite right and it’s just an airplane or a normal space-flight rocket that started in West Germany. I will take full responsibility!”

“Why can’t we just call another radar station? If they have the same issue, we will call the commanding general, if not, everything is fine. Please we don’t have any time to waste.” Lyosha had to think for a second but he also couldn’t deny that time was running, so he agreed to calling a neighboring radar-station. “This is Sergeant Dimtry, is there a problem at your station?” asked the slightly distorted voice, from the telephone. “Yes,” Lyosha answered “we have noticed a ping from the west, but we believe it’s an error and didn’t want to notify our supervisors in fear of escalation, can you see something similar?”

This time the sergeant answered “No, it’s probably just an error, that is caused by something else, so nothing to worry about.”

“Thank you very much, you did a great service to your country” “Thank you and goodbye” “Goodbye.” He sighed in relief. “See Private, nothing to worry about.” But Seryozha still wasn’t convinced “What if they are the ones with an error and our system is working properly? I must call the commanding officer at least.”

“Don’t do it! If you call an officer, he will call a Major, who again will call a Major General and this will go on for so long, until some Marshal decides to push his own big red button!” Now tears started appearing in the private’s eyes again. “I am sorry, but I will do what I must” He reached again for the phone and this time he was quicker than his superior. But before the officer on the other end picked up the phone, there were already two 9,95 mm large holes in his chest and smoke came out of Comrade Lyosha’s Makarov.

“Hello, hello, is anybody there?” The voice from the receiver was distant and distorted but he still was able to hear it.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to call you officer. Everything is all right. I apologize for the interference.”

“Make sure it won’t happen again!”

The harsh words didn’t matter to Lyosha, as he turned off the alarm and cleaned up the “mess” he had made. He thought about what he should tell his superiors, if they were to find out, and they would eventually find out, he remembered that the room was of course monitored at all times through CCTV and separate audio recordings. The relief he felt was so immense like the beginning of spring after the long cold winters of his motherland. At exactly 5:13 am the nuclear warhead exploded over Moscow.