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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

December 13, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: JIM CANNON  
FROM: JAMES E. CONNOR *JE C*  
SUBJECT: Earthquake Project

The attached notation was directed to you in the President's outbox:

"How are we coming on the earthquake project?"

Please follow-up with appropriate action.

cc: Dick Cheney

Attachment:

Article from The Christian Science Monitor, Dated 12/9/76

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Jim Cannon

How are we  
coming on the earthquake  
project?

Dec. 9, 1976

# U.S. offers to check out anyone's quake forecast

By Robert C. Cowen  
Staff writer of

The Christian Science Monitor

Boston

If you want to make an earthquake prediction by scientific means — or otherwise — the U.S. Geological Survey would like to have it. The survey will put your forecast on com-

puter and check it against every relevant quake recorded to see how well you score.

While the survey takes little stock in predictions that southern California will have an earthquake before Christmas, USGS scientist Roger N. Hunter says it is time to check out the credibility of those who make such claims.

The current forecast of note is made by Henry Minturn of Los Angeles, who foresees a major southern California quake in the next few weeks. Virtually unknown among earth scientists, Mr. Minturn claims to use a prediction method that involves lunar tidal forces which might trigger quakes in susceptible regions.

USGS experts do not think much of either Mr. Minturn's method or his forecasts. He has been vague in explaining details of both. And, as for tidal triggering, USGS scientist Peter Ward says it has proved to be "very unreliable."

Mr. Minturn claims to have "hit it right on the nose" in predicting the quake (7.3 on the

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## ★U.S. offers to check out quake forecast

Richter scale) that hit northern Chile and southern Peru Nov. 29, according to the Associated Press. What he had predicted was a quake south of Mexico City. To claim that this forecast was verified by a shock thousands of miles away in a quake-prone area is just too vague to be credible to precision-minded geologists, in Dr. Ward's opinion.

Dr. Ward has said he wants to keep an "open mind" on such claimed forecasting methods. A desire to do this, Dr. Hunter explains, is another reason for his prediction-logging project.

### Most 'too general'

Seismologists are identifying earthquake precursor signs — land tilt, ground water levels, changes in electrical conductivity of rocks, and other such physical phenomena. They even are investigating behavior of animals, which seem to sense impending quakes days in advance. But there is no reliable forecasting technique yet in hand. This, Dr. Hunter says, is

the perspective in which all quake forecasts should be seen.

As of this writing, Dr. Hunter's project had recorded some 1,500 quake predictions. Only one or two of them have come from qualified scientists, he says. Most suffer from what he calls "too much generality." They merely specify a quake sometime within a year or so in a wide area that gets many quakes a year.

Perhaps when the public sees how poorly the "scare" predictions actually score, this will put such things into perspective, Dr. Hunter says hopefully. Also, there is always the possibility of finding someone with genuine earthquake prediction skill. "I hope we find someone like that," Dr. Hunter says.

If you would like to try your hand at forecasting, just send the details to:

U.S. Geological Survey, National Earthquake Information Center, Mail Stop 968, Box 25046, Denver Federal Center, Denver, Colorado 80225, Attention: Roger N. Hunter.