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NUCLEAR FUTURES:

PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND US NUCLEAR STRATEGY

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1

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The British American Security Information Council (BASIC) is an independent research organization that analyzes international security issues. BASIC works to promote public awareness of defense, disarmament, military strategy, and nuclear policies in order to foster informed debate on these issues. BASIC facilitates the exchange of information and analysis on both sides of the Atlantic.

NUCLEAR FUTURES:

Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and US Nuclear Strategy

This report was written by Hans M. Kristensen.

This is the second of a series of BASIC Research Reports looking at the future of Nuclear Weapons Policy. The third Nuclear Futures report by Nicola Butler and Stephen Young, for publication later this year, will examine options for initiatives by

European states and institutions towards the goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

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Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANWFZ	African nuclear-weapon-free zone
BUR	Bottom Up Review
CINC	Commander-in-Chief
DOD	Department of Defense
DSWA	Defense Special Weapons Agency
EMP	Electromagnetic Pulse
ICBM	inter-continental ballistic missile
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JSCP	Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan
NPR	Nuclear Posture Review
NPT	nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSA	Negative Security Assurance
NUWEP	Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy

NWC	Nuclear Weapons Council
PDD	Presidential Decision Directive
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SAG	Strategic Advisory Group
SIOP	Single Integrated Operational Plan
SILVER	Strategic Installation List of Vulnerability Effects and Results
SLBM	submarine launched ballistic missile
SRS	SLBM Retargeting System
STRATCOM	Strategic Command
SWPS	Strategic War Planning System
TIG	Technology Initiatives Game
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

Executive Summary

In November 1997, President Clinton issued a highly classified Presidential Decision Directive

(PDD), giving new guidelines to the military on targeting nuclear weapons. According to reports, the new PDD allows for the use of nuclear weapons against "rogue" states – those suspected of having access to weapons of mass destruction.

The use of nuclear weapons to deter attack by weapons of mass destruction, other than nuclear weapons, remains controversial. General Lee Butler, former Commander-in-Chief of US Strategic Command, now describes using nuclear weapons as a solution to chemical or biological attack as an "out-moded idea." Conventional retaliation would be far more proportionate, less damaging to neighboring states and less horrific for innocent civilians, he says. "There are no rogue nations, only rogue leaders."

In 1995, President Clinton issued a "negative security assurance," pledging that the United States would not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states

parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). However, the current US nuclear posture conflicts with that pledge.

Non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the NPT have long demanded legally binding "negative security assurances," guaranteeing that nuclear weapons will not be used against them. The issue is on the agenda for the 1998 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in Geneva in April 1998.

However, Special Assistant to the President Robert Bell has already stated that negative security assurances will not tie the hands of US decision-makers faced with a chemical or biological attack. "It's not difficult to define a scenario in which a rogue state would use chemical weapons or biological weapons and not be afforded protection under our negative security assurance," he noted.

Documents obtained through the US Freedom of Information Act also reveal criticism of the negative security assurance from within the US military. These documents show how US planning for the use of nuclear weapons against Third World proliferators has developed in the 1990s. The concept of targeting Third World proliferators is relatively new to US nuclear doctrine. However, since the end of the Cold War the US military has seen "increasingly capable Third World threats" as a new justification for maintaining US strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons.

The extensive focus on proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has resulted in "fewer but more widespread targets" for the remaining US nuclear weapons. The US nuclear arsenal is in the middle of a multi-billion dollar upgrade that will make it capable of quickly shifting between a greater number of limited contingencies all over the world.

Additionally, new modifications of a number of US nuclear weapons are currently underway in order to provide new capabilities suitable for targeting potential proliferators. In 1996, the B61-11 modification was identified by the Department of Defense as the "weapon of choice" for targeting Libya's alleged underground chemical weapons plant at Tarhunah. Other weapons "modifications" are in the pipeline.

However, given the overwhelming US conventional capability, there is no need to draw up plans for nuclear war in the Third World. Using nuclear weapons to deter states armed with other weapons of mass destruction is counterproductive, undermining the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

By using nuclear weapons in this way, the United States is sending a message that nuclear weapons are important for achieving prestige in world affairs and for accomplishing military and political objectives. Pointing nuclear weapons at regional troublemakers will provide them with a justification to acquire nuclear weapons themselves. Encouraging nuclear proliferation can only increase the risk to US security in the long term.

A reaffirmation of the commitments to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament by removing chemical, biological, and radiological weapons and facilities from US war planning would be a more fitting post-Cold War measure.

Nevertheless, as the documents researched as the basis for this paper demonstrate, planning for nuclear war in the Third World has progressed virtually unopposed.

5

With little informed opposition and public debate, the result is a nuclear doctrine that borrows heavily from Cold War nuclear thinking. President Clinton's Decision Directive of November 1997 permits this planning to continue.

6

Introduction

In November 1997, President Clinton issued new guidelines to the US military on targeting of nuclear weapons. According to *The Washington Post*, highly classified Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 60 "contains language that would permit US nuclear strikes after enemy attacks using chemical or biological weapons." "Rogue states," a terminology commonly used by the Pentagon for countries such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea and Syria, are specifically listed as possible targets in the event of regional conflicts or crises.[1]

The new directive replaces guidelines last issued under President Reagan nearly 17 years ago. But according to Special Assistant to the President Robert Bell, the three basic situations in which the United States might use nuclear weapons have not been changed by the new PDD.[2] They are: if the attacking country has nuclear weapons; if the aggressor is not in compliance with the international treaty to curb the spread of nuclear weapons; or if it is allied to a nuclear power in its attack on the United States. However, Special Assistant Bell also states that the PDD reflects the current reality, in which an attacker using weapons of mass destruction could face nuclear reprisal.[3] US declaratory policy on this point remains ambiguous because the term "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD) refers not only to nuclear weapons but also to chemical, biological, and radiological weapons, as well as the means to deliver them.

The use of nuclear weapons to deter WMD other than nuclear weapons remains controversial. General Lee Butler, former Commander-in-Chief of US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) 1992-94 and Commander-in-Chief of US Strategic Air Command (SAC) 1991-92, who played a key role in shaping US nuclear posture after the Cold War, now describes using nuclear weapons as a solution to chemical or biological attack as an "outmoded idea." Conventional retaliation would be far more proportionate, less damaging to neighboring states and less horrific for innocent civilians, he says. "There are no rogue nations, only rogue leaders."[4]

In addition, non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) have long demanded legally binding "negative security assurances," guaranteeing that nuclear weapons will not be used against them. The issue is on the

agenda for the 1998 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in Geneva in April 1998. Special Assistant Bell has already stated that negative security assurances will not tie the hands of US decision-makers faced with a chemical or biological attack. "It's not difficult to define a scenario in which a rogue state would use chemical weapons or biological weapons and not be afforded protection under our negative security assurance."[5]

In 1995, in the run-up to the NPT Conference, the United States, along with the United Kingdom, France and Russia, reaffirmed its negative security assurance not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the Treaty. However, the ink was barely dry on President Clinton's pledge before the Pentagon updated a plan to do just that.

Previously classified documents obtained through the US Freedom of Information Act reveal the background to the latest PDD. These documents reveal that not only did President Clinton's 1995 pledge fail to change US nuclear doctrine, but that US military planners have continued to plan for nuclear war in the Third World ever since.

While the end of the Cold War resulted in a significant cutback in the nuclear target base and the number of nuclear weapons, the extensive focus on proliferation of WMD has resulted in a geographical expansion of the potential targets for remaining US nuclear weapons. In order to be capable of taking on the broader target list, the US nuclear arsenal is in the middle of a multi-billion dollar upgrade that will make it capable of quickly shifting between a greater number of limited contingencies all around the world. The changes represent as significant a development – although very different – in nuclear doctrine and war-fighting capability as the shift in the early 1960s from Mutually Assured Destruction to Flexible Response.

The plan to use nuclear weapons against proliferators of WMD creates a fundamental disharmony in US post-Cold War nuclear policy. In order to strengthen the NPT regime, non-nuclear-weapon state signatories are promised that they will not be targeted. Yet in order to fight proliferators, the Pentagon is planning to do so nonetheless.

Beyond the issue of disharmony, proliferation is becoming an increasingly prominent driver in nuclear war planning. The large residual nuclear arsenal in Russia is still the focus – by virtue of sheer numbers – but the ability also to deter potential proliferators armed with nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological weapons has reshaped declaratory nuclear policy and continues to change US nuclear posture. The development threatens to grant nuclear weapons an enduring role in the post-Cold War era, undercut deep reductions and to thwart the goal of nuclear disarmament.

Similar, but more limited, developments are underway in other nuclear-weapon states as well as within NATO. NATO is embracing US doctrine by expanding alliance nuclear strategy to include the use of British Trident submarines and US free-fall

bombs deployed in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, and Turkey against WMD attacks by rogue states. The focus of this paper, however, is some of the changes that have taken place in US nuclear planning during the 1990s.

Nuclear Disharmony

The pledge not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the NPT was an important US foreign policy instrument in ensuring international support for the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995. It was repeated by all the five declared nuclear-weapon states in joint United Nations Security Council resolution 984 (1995), which was adopted unanimously on 11 April 1995. The pledge was also listed in the NPT Conference's decision on "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament."[6]

Yet only a few months later, in December 1995, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) completed a review of their "Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations" (Joint Pub 3-12) which endorsed planning for use of nuclear weapons against targets in countries such as Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea. An early version of this doctrine had emerged in April 1993. It was the product of a major refurbishing of US nuclear war planning which included expansion of targeting from the former Soviet Union and China to include regional troublemakers around the world armed with WMD. Disclosure of the document caused a scandal, and criticism forced the Pentagon to downplay Third World targeting in public since it risked undercutting White House efforts to rally international support for indefinite extension of the NPT.

The problem was obvious: the development represented a horizontal and vertical expansion of US nuclear targeting, which was at odds with the vow the United States had made to "reduce" the role of nuclear weapons and pursue complete nuclear disarmament. Moreover, several of the non-nuclear countries at the negotiating table were becoming targets themselves, in blunt conflict with President Clinton's pledge not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the NPT.

President Clinton's pledge, known as a negative security assurance, was a reaffirmation of a policy first initiated under the Carter Administration in June 1978. It states:

> The United States reaffirms that it will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons except in the case of an invasion or any other attack on the United States, its territories, its armed forces or other troops, its allies, or on a State towards which it has a security commitment, carried out or sustained by such a non-nuclear-weapon State in association or alliance with a nuclear-weapon state.[7]

How could the United States promise not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the NPT such as Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea, and then approve a doctrine which condoned using nuclear weapons to deter the use of chemical or biological by the very same states?

When confronted with the new evidence a few weeks prior to the start of the extension conference, the head of the US NPT delegation, Ambassador Thomas Graham, took cover behind the US-Russian bilateral agreement no longer to store designated target data in the guidance system of strategic nuclear missiles. "As of May 31, 1994, no country is targeted by the strategic forces of the United States," Graham told a United Nations press conference in New York.[8] Removing target data from the missiles, however, does not prevent a country from being a target of nuclear planning. In any case, Graham's argument was trivial because target data can be re-loaded into the missiles' computers within minutes.

But the US Administration was painfully aware of the importance many non-nuclear parties to the NPT attach to negative security assurances. It had no intention of confirming that some of them were becoming nuclear targets. "I therefore am deeply concerned about this type of undue criticism of the United States prior to the Conference," US Assistant Secretary of Defense, Ashton B. Carter, wrote a few days before the delegates met in New York, "which only can diminish the chances for a successful outcome." 9 Nuclear doctrine or not, "I want to strongly emphasize," US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Counterproliferation Policy Mitchell B. Wallerstein echoed in October 1995 in an interview with *Air Force Magazine*, "that counterproliferation is fundamentally about finding nonnuclear solutions to these problems... The United States is not looking to retarget our nuclear weapons."[10]

Even as these words were being spoken, the planners at the JCS were putting the final touches to the updated nuclear doctrine. Despite the strong denials, the doctrine condoned the expansion of US nuclear targeting to non-nuclear countries. President Clinton's 1995 pledge forced no change in nuclear planning; the updated doctrine is virtually identical to the 1993 version.

A New Nuclear Doctrine Is Born

The concept of targeting Third World proliferators is relatively new to US nuclear doctrine, although the United States did target some Third World countries as a matter of course as early as the late 1980s. However, this was done as part of its global plan against the Soviet Union and its potential allies, and as insurance against the possibility of a third country trying to take advantage of the depletion of US and Soviet arsenals during a major nuclear war.[11] Now, however, some Third World countries are being independently targeted, as proliferators of weapons of mass destruction.

References in nuclear strategy to WMD were rare prior to the 1990s and proliferation as such was not a rationale for US nuclear doctrine. For example, in spring 1989, 150 people from government, military services, academia, industry, and the Department of Energy laboratories met at the Los Alamos Center for National Security Studies to review the past and future of nuclear weapons. A report from the meeting (which was chaired by, among others, President Bush's National Security Advisor Brent

Scowcroft) observed that several participants had suggested that, if hostile regional states acquire nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, "the United States may need to revise its nuclear doctrine and forces specifically to deal with issues raised by such proliferation."[12]

With the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the demise of the Warsaw Pact, however, all that changed. Then Commander-in-Chief SAC, General Butler, told an audience at the Air Power History Symposium in September 1992 that, "as early as October 1989 [before the Soviet Union had broken up] we abandoned global war with the Soviet Union as the principle planning and programming paradigm for the US armed forces." The result was a "complete revisit of nuclear weapons policy and the SIOP [Single Integrated Operational Plan] target base" which resulted in the number of targets in the SIOP, the chief US nuclear war plan, being reduced from 10,000 to eventually around 2,000.[13] The nuclear forces of the former "evil empire" were still of concern, but nuclear war planners saw that "a new series of threats had begun to emerge on the horizon," and began to shift their attention toward potential targets outside Russia and China. The post-Cold War target base would consist of "fewer but more widespread targets."[14]

When the JCS published the Military Net Assessment in March 1990, the shift was already evident. The report pointed to "increasingly capable Third World threats" as a new justification for maintaining US strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons.[15] Three months later, in June 1990, as non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries were formally removed from the SIOP, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee making the first high-level reference to WMD as a formal rationale for keeping US nuclear weapons.[16] These statements were small but important early indications of a change in US nuclear thinking.

The Gulf War and the disclosure of Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapons program accelerated the changes in US nuclear doctrine. In January 1991, as US forces were deployed to liberate Kuwait, Defense Secretary Cheney issued the top-secret Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy (NUWEP), which formally tasked the military to plan for nuclear operations against nations capable of developing WMD.[17] This guidance resulted in SIOP-93, the first overall nuclear war plan formally to incorporate Third World WMD targets.[18]

Nothing was said in public about these important additions to the SIOP, but a couple of hints were given. In March 1991, the JCS suggested in the Joint Military Net Assessment that non-strategic nuclear weapons "could assume a broader role globally in response to the proliferation of nuclear capability among Third World nations." The report reiterated, however, that nuclear proliferation in general necessitated an upgrade of the command, control, and communication capabilities of US forces, and identified the MILSTAR satellite communications system, designed to provide secure global command and control capabilities for nuclear war fighting, as an example of such an upgrade.[19]

Likewise, in February 1992, Secretary Cheney stated in the Defense Department's annual report, "the possibility that Third World nations may acquire nuclear capabilities has led the Department to make adjustments to nuclear and strategic defense forces and to the policies that guide them." US nuclear strategy, Cheney said, "must now also encompass potential instabilities that could arise when states or leaders perceive they have little to lose from employing weapons of mass destruction."[20]

When SAC Commander General Butler testified before Congress in April 1992, he explained the role of nuclear weapons in missions against "rogue" nations. "A US nuclear deterrent force encourages non-proliferation, albeit within limits bounded by rational calculations," Butler said, and added, "Some contend that deterrence is not applicable outside the classic Cold War paradigm – especially when such weapons are in the hands of seemingly irrational leaders. In my view, the very fact that such leaders pursue nuclear capability implies a certain lethal rationality."[21]

Later the same month, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force John J. Welch told Congress that "the emphasis of the deterrence equation has been shifted from just deterring the development or use of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union, to deterring the development or use of nuclear weapons by other countries, as well."[22]

These changes were being incorporated into SIOP-93, but President Bush's unilateral disarmament initiatives from September 1991 had removed US strategic bombers and Minuteman II intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) from alert. The move, which was accompanied by a decision to withdraw all tactical nuclear weapons from surface ships and attack submarines, and drastically reduce the weapons deployed in Europe, together with Soviet reciprocal steps, forced new changes in the SIOP. The changes were reflected in the JCS's new Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP) from 1992 that laid out the military objectives for the nuclear war plan. However, the plan also directed military planners to re-target US nuclear weapons beyond Russia and China to other countries developing weapons of mass destruction.[23]

The nuclear cuts on both sides, combined with the new WMD mission, resulted in a rewriting of Annex C to the JSCP, which contains the targeting and damage criteria for the use of nuclear weapons. SIOP-93 was scheduled for completion in October

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1992, but was rushed into effect four months early on 1 June 1992.[24]

However, even before SIOP-93 was implemented, Presidents Bush and Yeltsin agreed to new cuts in the arsenals. The deal was sealed at the Washington Summit Agreement in June 1992, which resulted in an updated NUWEP 92 and yet another rewriting of the JSCP Annex C, completed in the spring of 1993.[25] Along with additional guidance, this work resulted in a new nuclear war plan, the SIOP-94, in spring 1993.

Shortly before SIOP-94 was implemented, General Butler, the first Commander of STRATCOM when it replaced SAC, told *The New York Times*, "our focus now is not just the former Soviet Union but any potentially hostile country that has or is seeking weapons of mass destruction."[26] Butler set up a new Joint Intelligence Center "to assess from STRATCOM's operational perspective the growing threat represented by the global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."[27] Implementation of SIOP-94 coincided with the JCS publishing of the first version of the Joint Nuclear Doctrine (3-12) in April 1993.

The "Living SIOP"

STRATCOM had already realized that US nuclear forces were ill-suited for nuclear war in Third World. Incorporating the Third World into the nuclear war plan was not just a matter of re-targeting the weapons. The Cold War focus on the Soviet Union and China meant that hardware and software had "typically been configured for the Northern Hemisphere only." Key target data processing technologies "currently have no capability south of the equator," a STRATCOM study had already concluded in March 1992. The report recommended development of a "global capability" by the late 1990s.[28] Furthermore, expanding nuclear deterrence to smaller and more diverse regional WMD contingencies meant that nuclear planners would be faced with rapidly changing guidance and requirements. The old war planning system was built to handle updates over a matter of years, but nuclear deterrence in the post-Cold War era demanded changes on a monthly – sometimes even weekly – basis. The solution was the creation of a completely new nuclear war planning apparatus based on "adaptive planning," a concept which has since been adopted in NATO nuclear planning as well.

Adaptive planning refers to the means by which nuclear planners can quickly execute selected or limited attack options against regions inside and outside Russia, using weapons otherwise assigned exclusively to the traditional SIOP plan.[29] STRATCOM set up a group of ten people in December 1992 and tasked them "to develop a flexible, globally-focused, war-planning process known as the Strategic War Planning System (SWPS)." The group, known as the Strategic Planning Study Group, developed what they called "a living SIOP," a real-time nuclear war plan which could receive virtually instantaneous war fighting commands and upgrades. STRATCOM Commander General Butler described the new concept in an interview with Jane's Defense Weekly in the spring of 1993:

> Adaptive planning challenges the headquarters to formulate plans very quickly in response to spontaneous threats which are more likely to emerge in a new international environment unconstrained by the Super Power stand-off... We can accomplish this task by using generic targets, rather than identifying specific scenarios and specific enemies, and then crafting a variety of response options to address these threats. To ensure their completeness, these options consider the employment of both nuclear and conventional weapons. Thus, by its very nature, adaptive planning offers unique solutions, tailored to generic regional dangers involving weapons of mass destruction.[30]

The concept was approved in July 1993, the final SWPS report finished in October 1993, and the Living SIOP was implemented on 1 April 1994, coinciding with completion of SIOP-95.[31] Planning requirements examined went well beyond the core SIOP to include items like crisis planning and non-strategic nuclear forces.[32] The new SWPS will achieve initial operations capability in late 1998, and when completed in 2003,

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will expand the US capability to incorporate the routine processing of WMD targets outside Russia in countries such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North Korea.[33]

Until recently, updating the SIOP was a major task, taking 14-18 months to complete. Even SIOP-94, completed in Spring 1993 after significant reductions in target numbers following the breakup of the Soviet Union and the demise of the Warsaw Pact, took nearly 17 months.[34] The "living SIOP," by contrast, is based on continuous analysis of guidance, forces and target changes, rather than a fixed plan, reducing the time for complete overhaul of the SIOP to six months.[35] Wholesale revision of an attack plan for a new enemy will now be possible in months.[36]

Regional nuclear contingencies, however, may involve only one or a few dozen nuclear weapons and not large strategic weapon systems at all. Moreover, in order to encompass all types of nuclear planning, the modernized SWPS erases the traditional distinction between strategic and tactical nuclear planning. Already in 1992, SAC Commander General Butler had emphasized that he wanted to see "a simplified process that makes no distinction between strategic and tactical mission planning," and one of the requirements in the new SWPS is that the SIOP process "be able to plan for nonstrategic nuclear force employment."37 The new SWPS will achieve a preliminary theater support of non-strategic nuclear weapons planning by January 1998, and the goal is optimized adaptive planning within the theaters.[38] This includes consolidation of theater and strategic target construction and implementation of the Non-Strategic Nuclear Force planning capability.[39] As a result, nuclear Tomahawk land-attack missiles assigned to nuclear attack submarines and dual-capable aircraft, like the F-16 and F-15E the US Air Force currently deploys in Germany, Italy, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, will be incorporated into STRATCOM nuclear planning, albeit in coordination with the regional commanders.

The National Academy of Sciences recently recommended that adaptive planning be used to alleviate the rigidity of the Cold War SIOP.[40] The Academy also recommended that "the US should announce that the only purpose of US nuclear weapons is to deter attacks on the United States and its allies, adopting no first use for nuclear weapons as official declaratory policy."[41] However, it is adaptive planning itself that allows nuclear weapons to take on a broader role against chemical, biological, and radiological weapons, with nuclear responses of a more limited nature and weapons that result in less collateral damage. Adaptive planning grants nuclear deterrence an aura of acceptability, and it is a central element of the "Living SIOP."42

So the race is on for rapid planning capabilities – even faster than those required to change the overall SIOP plan – to allow planning for limited nuclear operations, such as those in regional contingencies against "rogue" nations, in a much shorter time. Work currently underway at the Air Force's Rome Laboratory aims to provide planners with the capability to plan "critical nuclear options" in the SIOP "within days rather than months" and limited SIOP re-planning options "in less than 30 minutes."[43]

One incentive is that a greater portion of future Russian strategic nuclear forces will be mobile, as will some Third World WMD targets. Another driver is that a greater geographical spread of limited target areas in different regional contingencies, combined with future reductions in the overall number of nuclear warheads in the arsenal, will increase the need to quickly shift assignment of a significant number of nuclear warheads from one theater to the other. Capabilities derived from what was previously called the Survivable Adaptive Planning Experiment, for example, are aimed at allowing SIOP generation in less than 24 hours and re-targeting of up to 1000 relocatable targets per day.[44] The result is that in addition to the core war plan (SIOP), STRATCOM must be prepared to provide a greater number of smaller, more flexible, adaptive options.[45]

The Nuclear Posture Review

At the same time that this expansion of the capabilities and the role of US nuclear weapons was underway, six working groups were busily undertaking a major review of US nuclear policy and

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force structure. Initiated in October 1993, the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) was described as the most ambitious review of US nuclear weapons and nuclear planning in decades. The six working groups were to investigate:[46]

- the role of nuclear weapons in US security strategy;
- nuclear force structure and infrastructure;
- nuclear force operations and Command & Control;
- nuclear safety, security, and use control;
- the relationship between alternative US nuclear postures and counterproliferation policy;
- the relationship between alternative US nuclear postures and the threat reduction policy with the former Soviet Union.[47]

Assistant Secretary Carter was in charge of the NPR process, and at STRATCOM there were concerns about the "negative feelings" Carter had demonstrated in the past toward nuclear weapons. Background information on Carter indicated "a less-than favorable long-term outlook for nuclear weapons" and long-term visions of "complete denuclearization." These were not popular opinions in a command like STRATCOM, whose very existence relied on nuclear weapons. Persuading such policy makers of a continued need and "wider role" for nuclear weapons would be, STRATCOM feared, "an uphill battle."[48]

Yet, even "denuclearizers" like Carter did not rock the boat too much. The opposition to deep cuts and major changes was too great for Carter, and he soon ran his head against the military establishment. STRATCOM's position was that "the basic role of nuclear weapons in US security policy had not changed with the end of the Cold War." But after only four months work, the feeling within STRATCOM was that "the process in which it had put great faith had broken down." General Admire, the acting co-chairman of the NPR, told Carter that he was "concerned with the process by which the NPR is being conducted." When Carter proposed that the review should prepare recommendations for the new secretary of defense-designate, retired Admiral Bobby Inman complained to STRATCOM chief Admiral Henry G. Chiles, Jnr., that it "imposes a schedule that will backfill the vacuum with grab-bag thinking and then ask the Secretary for his blessing... This would be comical if we didn't have so much at stake."[49]

Following the Washington Summit Agreement in June 1992, STRATCOM had conducted a major force structure analysis to see which forces the US should maintain after START II. The final report, "Sun City," investigated nine options, six of which were at the 3,500 accountable warhead limit, while the other three fell "well below" 3,500 weapons.[50] STRATCOM chose a "preferred force" and wanted the NPR to accept it, but a few weeks prior to completion of the NPR, STRATCOM realized that the preferred force was not even among the eight force structures under consideration within the NPR process. Admiral Chiles intervened and warned that, "all three legs of the Triad are at risk in the NPR." Without a triad, the US would not be able to maintain a nuclear posture capable of deterring and, if necessary, defeating a resurgent Russia, while maintaining the flexibility to deal with potential threats from hostile regional powers.[51]

When the review was completed in September 1994, well after the first "Living SIOP" (SIOP-95) had been implemented, it was apparent that apart from a few more reductions little had changed. The Pentagon said it had changed the way it thinks about nuclear weapons and that it was reducing their role. However, after 55,000 man hours and 11 months of work – and without a written final report – the NPR essentially implemented nuclear force structure studies conducted by STRATCOM several years earlier following President Bush's unilateral initiatives in 1991 and the Washington Summit Agreement in June 1992. More importantly, the NPR reaffirmed the importance of nuclear deterrence to US security and supported the continued existence of a nuclear Triad.

Moreover, STRATCOM's inclusion of regional WMD contingencies into the nuclear war plan was condoned, although initially somewhat halfheartedly by the NPR process. During the working group meetings, Carter's special assistant and former

professor at the University of Maryland, Dr. Steven Fetter, argued repeatedly that nuclear weapons could only deter nuclear use or acquisition, although the effect on acquisition was "hotly" debated. No meaningful contribution, Fetter argued, was likely in deterring chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction.[52] Eventually, both Fetter and Carter were outmaneuvered by STRATCOM. Even the suggestion by the Office of the Secretary of Defense that chemical weapons should be viewed as a more important threat than biological weapons was strongly opposed by the military representatives.[53]

In response to questions asked by the working groups on the role of nuclear weapons in counterproliferation efforts, however, STRATCOM argued that while nuclear weapons may not directly affect Third World countries' acquisition of WMD, maintaining nuclear weapons could support political aims. This is accomplished, STRATCOM explained, "through demonstrating intent by maintaining an arsenal and continuously providing war plans to support regional CINCs [Commanders-in-Chief]... Within the context of a regional single or few warhead detonation, classical deterrence already allows for adaptively planned missions to counter any use of WMD," STRATCOM elaborated.[54] Asked about the US response to WMD use, STRATCOM answered:

> The US should preserve its options for responding to the situation by maintaining its current policy which does not preclude first use of nuclear weapons. While it would not be in our interest to unleash the destructive power of a nuclear weapon, the loss of even one American city, or the endangerment of vital American interests overseas is unacceptable. To counter this threat, the US should not rule out the preemptive first use of nuclear weapons. In addition, following the use of WMD, the US should again seek to preserve its options. The US policy should not require retaliation with nuclear weapons, but it should leave that option open as one of a complete spectrum of possible options.[55]

Carter, however, was concerned that nuclear deterrence in WMD scenarios could have negative impact on the NPT regime and instructed the drafting groups to suggest possible political, economical and conventional deterrence options that could complement the US nuclear posture.[56]

In the end, however, the counterproliferation working group sided with STRATCOM. Not only did it accept STRATCOM's broad nuclear deterrence vision, but it warned that deep reductions in US nuclear weapons might influence proliferators to decide to match US numbers or allies under US protection to reconsider their alternatives for defense.[57] Indeed, within the counterproliferation group there was "group consensus that [the] full range of nuclear options is desirable to deter proliferant nations," and the majority wanted the "unique contribution of nuclear deterrence to counterproliferation" to be "stated more forcefully."[58]

In addition to declaratory policy, the group also agreed that nuclear weapons remain the only method of destroying certain types of targets including deeply buried facilities.[59] Only on one issue, the question of terrorist use of WMD, did the group see a limitation: nuclear deterrence should only apply to state-sponsored terrorism, because non-state actors would not be deterred by the US nuclear posture.[60]

In sum, STRATCOM probably could not have hoped for stronger backing. When the results were briefed to Congress in September 1994, nuclear weapons featured prominently in counterproliferation roles such as to "deter WMD acquisition or use." But these conclusions were largely deleted from the public record, as were several non-strategic nuclear weapons missions in support of counterproliferation scenarios.[61] Instead, the public conclusion was that the NPR had reduced the role of nuclear weapons.

The Silver Books

Once the policy and doctrine were in place, the next step was to plan for it. STRATCOM was assigned to help regional commands draw up the plans for nuclear war with regional troublemakers.[62] But as late as December 1994, the overall responsibility for the counterproliferation mission had not yet been

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assigned to a unified command.[63]

General Butler wanted to move STRATCOM "firmly into the counterproliferation mission."[64] In April 1993, he testified before Congress that, at the request of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he was "working with selected regional Unified Commands to explore the transfer of planning responsibilities for employment of nuclear weapons in theater conflicts." He noted that this initiative could "save manpower and further centralize the planning and control" of US nuclear forces.[65]

However, planning for nuclear war with the Third World was a new development. A White Paper from October 1993 describes how STRATCOM "already has a role in countering weapons of mass destruction in the context of deterring their use by the Former Soviet Union." Nevertheless, planners are now "focusing much of their thinking on developing a concept which can support both the civilian leadership and theater CINCs in planning for military counterproliferation options against weapons of mass destruction" outside Russia.[66] "We also need to have a strategy to deter the more 'undeterrable' leaders such as Quadaffi and Saddam Hussein," STRATCOM said.[67] One of the results of this effort was the creation of what were known as the Silver Books.

While there were many separate counterproliferation efforts underway in the Pentagon, none addressed the full spectrum of WMD targets within the context of real US military capabilities and limitations. Nor did they deal with proliferation of WMD as a global problem. With the Silver Books, the counterproliferation effort would be