

British Nuclear Planning system

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De-conflicting with US plans

In March 1993, during a session on Trident, the Chairman of the House of Commons Defence Committee raised the following point:

"I am not quite clear whether it is still the case that the targeting of our Trident fleet, once it is in operation, will be in liaison with Omaha, and whether it is therefore, if you like, pre-set by NATO decision making?"

Rear Admiral Irwin replied:

"We have declared the strategic system to NATO and we plan and deconflict our NATO target plans with the targeting centre in Omaha".

The reply relates to the main component of British plans, using Trident in a strategic role assigned to NATO. De-conflicting is the process of comparing and integrating a number of separate plans to use nuclear weapons. It avoids duplication and fratricide. The US coordinates and de-conflicts its own plans to use large numbers of nuclear weapons at STRATCOM headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska.

From 1959 onwards targeting of the V bombers was "progressively integrated" into the US Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP). British personnel were stationed in Omaha for this purpose. This arrangement still continues. Each year the US planners create a new version of the SIOP. It is likely that British plans to use Trident in a strategic role, assigned to NATO, are renewed on the same annual basis. Creating the SIOP involves drawing up complex plans which are then

tested through simulations. The main British plan will be a component of this process.

Points of contact receiving US information

The Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff has issued instructions on how information from the SIOP can be handed to British personnel. This secret document has the title:

"Guidance for the sanitation and distribution of SIOP information to SACEUR, United Kingdom Liaison Cell, Director Strategic Weapons System, and United Kingdom Strategic Targeting Center".

SACEUR is the senior US officer in NATO. He also holds the position of Commander US European Command. In the latter role he will have access to un-sanitised strategic targeting data. This guidance probably refers to information which he might pass on to British personnel at NATO headquarters, and possibly to officers from other NATO countries.

The UK Liaison Cell (UKLC) is identified as being at USSTRATCOM. UKLC is the British presence at the US nuclear planning centre in Omaha.

The address for the Director General Strategic Weapons Systems (DGSWS) is given as Bath. DGSWS is responsible for technical aspects of the Trident missile system, including fire control and target planning software.

The term "UK Strategic Targeting Center" almost certainly refers to the Nuclear Operations and Targeting Centre (NOTC) described below. This is the British nuclear planning facility in London.

A second US document outlines how information on Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicles (MIRVs) should be classified. It refers to Top Secret SIOP targeting information and outlines two exceptions to normal restrictions, one is for Canadian personnel working at the North American Aerospace Defence headquarters and the other is for British staff. This guidance permits the release of sensitive information to "UK operational personnel assigned to USSTRATCOM". The number of British personnel with access to sensitive information is to be restricted to "those absolutely necessary to carry out the USSTRATCOM

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