

NATO CP policy

JA Lansen, 1997. Air Force Academy

represent a modest effort to acquire limited capabilities to defend against an emerging WMD threat. Perhaps the only new big-ticket system to come out of this NATO effort, in British eyes, would be an Extended Air Defense program.¹⁷² These hopes were diminished, of course, by France's decision to withdraw from MEADS. In addition, the UK recognizes other small areas in which it would be worth pursuing counterproliferation capabilities, such as a biological weapons immunization policy.

With respect to the future of the Senior Defense Group on Proliferation, the United Kingdom believed that the issue of proliferation should have been considered within NATO's core committees, the existing force planning process, the CNAD equipment cooperation arena, and so on, rather than by a unique committee with a limited charter and life-span such as the DGP.¹⁷³ There may have been some need to keep the DGP around for a couple of years to ensure that these issues did get embedded in the appropriate committees, and to consider further policy choices and issues, but they did not support the idea of the DGP remaining in place indefinitely. Similarly, the British held that the SGP was created simply as a political counterbalance to the DGP, and had served its purpose. The ongoing work of the SGP could easily be merged with the mandate of other existing NATO bodies, which would have continued thinking about the political aspects of proliferation.¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Britain concurred in extending the mandate of both groups at the June 1996 NAC meeting.

W701

Britain has long committed its submarine forces to NATO strategy. In keeping with this record, it now has promised to dedicate a portion of its Trident missile force to NATO for use in a sub-strategic role, should that become necessary.¹⁷⁵ Such theater weapons, wielded by a European ally but used on behalf of the entire Alliance, could prove to be a decisive deterrent against a proliferant state or group threatening the

DGP - Defense Group on Proliferation

www.usafa.af.mil/inss/ocp/7.pdf

use of WMD against a NATO member. Britain thus supports, albeit perhaps unwittingly, the long-standing French call for a European pillar of the Alliance in security matters. The Trident commitment also makes up for the loss to SACEUR of Britain's dual-capable aircraft employing the WE 177 nuclear gravity bomb, which will be phased out of the UK weapons inventory over the course of the next several years.¹⁷⁶ By guaranteeing a certain number of SLBM missiles and warheads to SACEUR, the UK guarantees its own role in the continuing nuclear strategy of the Alliance, as well as making a significant contribution to NATO's ultimate deterrent against WMD threats or use.¹⁷⁷

The election of a new government in 1997 is not expected to alter Britain's position *vis* NATO's nonproliferation policy, or its support for these efforts. The Labour party did not campaign on issues of foreign policy, and its policy positions were closely aligned with the Tory party on most defense-related issues.