

## Chapter Three:

### *Adapting Nuclear Use Doctrine to the Needs of Counterproliferation*

Counterproliferation policy has had a profound influence during the 1990s on U.S. doctrine for use of nuclear weapons. As the U.S.-Russia-deterrent standoff has faded into the background, it has been necessary to find additional roles to justify the retention of nuclear weapons, especially tactical nuclear weapons. From the beginning of the 1990s, the United States began to envisage the use of nuclear weapons against Third World targets. This new target set included not just nuclear-armed (or potentially nuclear-armed) nations, but those whose arsenals included chemical and biological weapons. The new policies and doctrine would allow preventive or preemptive attacks. As Hans Kristensen of the Nautilus Institute wrote in 1997:

The shift was already evident in the Joint Chiefs' "Military Net Assessment" of March 1990, which cited "increasingly capable Third World threats" to justify the stockpiles of both strategic and non-strategic

nuclear weapons. Then, in June 1990, testifying before the Senate Appropriations Committee, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney made the first high-level statement that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was a rationale for keeping U.S. nuclear weapons.

Just after the Gulf War — and following the disclosure of Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapons program, Cheney issued the top-secret "Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy," which formally tasked the military with planning nuclear operations against potential proliferators.<sup>55</sup>

This shift in thinking required a change in planning methods for nuclear weapons use, one that the military was quick to work out.

General Butler described the new concept in a May 11, 1993 interview with *Jane's Defence Weekly*: "Adaptive planning" was

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<sup>55</sup> Kristensen, Hans, "Targets of Opportunity: How nuclear planners found new targets for old weapons," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 53, No. 5, September/October 1997.

designed to respond to “spontaneous threats which are more likely to emerge in a new international environment unconstrained by the Super Power stand-off.”

The plans would use “generic targets, rather than identifying specific scenarios and specific enemies.” Adaptive planning would offer “unique solutions, tailored to generic regional dangers involving weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>56</sup>

Kristensen goes on to describe how this process was operationalized, making war plans that the military could use if the need arose.

Butler wanted STRATCOM to have overall responsibility — to move “firmly into the counterproliferation mission.” In an October 1993 white paper, STRATCOM argued that it already had the necessary experience — “countering weapons of mass destruction in the context of deterring their use by the former Soviet Union.” STRATCOM’s next targets should be the more “undeterrable” leaders such as Qaddafi and Saddam Hussein.

STRATCOM began developing the “Silver Books” — plans for military strikes against facilities in “rogue nations,” including Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North Korea. “Silver” stood for “Strategic Installation List of Vulnerability Effects and Results,” and the project involved “the planning associated with a series of ‘silver bullet’ missions aimed at counterproliferation.” Targets included nuclear, chemical, biological, and command and control installations.

The Weapons Subcommittee of STRATCOM’s Strategic Advisory Group began analyzing various target sets and weapons capabilities in early 1994, emphasizing mechanisms that could defeat chemical and biological targets as well as buried targets. The subcommittee compared the effectiveness of conventional, unconventional, and nuclear attack on six potential targets.

By late 1994, STRATCOM had prepared a Silver Book for European Command, and it was developing a prototype for Pacific Command. STRATCOM briefed European Command staff during a November 1994 visit, and it later briefed Pacific and Central Commands and the Joint Staff Roles and Functions Working Group.<sup>57</sup>

The Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) produced by the Clinton administration in 1994 confirmed these results. Since then, the United States has had policy and plans in place to wage nuclear war against a developing country that possesses NBC weapons. As early as 1995, the Pentagon began to make specific plans against individual countries.

Iran became the first test case for the new doctrine, with STRATCOM performing an in-depth study in the fall of 1995 of how to target nuclear and chemical targets in Iran with U.S. nuclear weapons. ... The planners at STRATCOM, however, found that further coordination with Central Command was necessary before they could complete the study, so Admiral Chiles asked the planners to apply the new deterrence theory to North Korea instead....<sup>58 59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Kristensen, *op. cit.*

<sup>57</sup> Kristensen, *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Kristensen draws on the U.S. Strategic Command, “Minutes of the Fifty-Fourth United States Strategic Command Strategic Advisory Group Meeting (U), 19-20 October 1995, Offutt afb, Nebraska,” Secret/rd, January 1996, pp. 4, 11. Partially declassified and released under the Freedom of Information Act.

By 1996, this shift in doctrine had been expanded to include “non-state actors” or terrorists as legitimate targets for nuclear weapons. *Joint Publication 3-12.1, Doctrine for Joint Theater Nuclear Operations* states that:

Enemy combat forces and facilities that may be **likely targets** for nuclear strikes **include WMD and their delivery systems; ground combat units, air defense facilities, naval installations, combat vessels, nonstate actors, and underground facilities.** (Original emphasis)<sup>60</sup>

This addition is especially important. It would, for example, have allowed U.S. forces to have used nuclear weapons during the overthrow of the Taliban government of Afghanistan, because of their symbiotic link with Al-Qaeda. The anthrax letters attack on the United States, if it could be linked to a stockpile of the bacteria in a terrorist camp, could provide U.S. leaders with the justification under current nuclear doctrine for a nuclear strike wherever that camp might be.

Regional and local U.S. commanders are not constrained to wait to be attacked with NBC weapons before retaliating. Rather, they are told that active as well as passive defense measures should be taken against this possibility and “Operations must be planned and executed to **destroy or eliminate enemy WMD delivery systems** and supporting infrastructure **before they can strike friendly forces.**”<sup>61</sup> (Emphasis added) Such a strike could be with conventional weapons if the commander in theater had full confidence that the facility to be destroyed was vulnerable to conventional attack. However, as the above quote from the Joint Chiefs’ *Doctrine on Theater Nuclear Operations* shows, the United States is prepared for a nuclear first strike in theater warfare.

In 1997, President Clinton approved *Presidential Decision Directive 60* (PDD 60). This document remains classified, but Robert Bell, then Special Advisor to the President, told the media in an interview shortly after the adoption of PDD 60 that it had not altered the counterproliferation role of nuclear weapons, but had rather confirmed that role.<sup>62</sup> This is confirmed in more explicit language by the Air War College:

In a Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) on nuclear arms strategy, which President Clinton issued in November of 1997, the President employed language that would permit U.S. nuclear strikes after enemy attacks using chemical or biological weapons.<sup>63</sup>

This blurring of lines between nuclear, chemical and biological weapons is to be regretted. It provides the best incentive imaginable for a potential foe of the United States to move to development of nuclear weapons, as they would suffer the same consequences for nuclear use as for a chemical or biological attack. In addition, nuclear weapons are likely to have a stronger deterrent effect on U.S. action, as the effects of nuclear use against U.S. targets are likely far more serious than any other threat. Further, the fact that U.S. nuclear doctrine allows nuclear use preemptively gives an incentive for early nuclear use by a U.S. enemy.

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<sup>60</sup> Executive Summary, Joint Publication 3-12.1, *Doctrine for Joint Theater Nuclear Operations*, published by Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 9, 1996, p. vii.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ix.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, R. Jeffrey, “Clinton Directive Changes Strategy on Nuclear Arms,” *The Washington Post*, December 7, 1997.

<sup>63</sup> *What is Counterproliferation?*, from the website of the Air War College at [www.au.af.mil](http://www.au.af.mil).



### THE ROOTS OF THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S NUCLEAR USE DOCTRINE

Some influential scientists at the nuclear weapons laboratories, as well as some defense policy experts, have been concerned that it is not enough to consider only conventional options for counterproliferation missions, and that the time has come to work on nuclear weapons options for these military tasks. Many of these individuals have become senior figures in the Bush administration. For example, current DTRA chief Stephen Younger, when Associate Laboratory Director for Nuclear Weapons at Los Alamos National Laboratory, wrote a major policy paper entitled *Nuclear Weapons in the Twenty-First Century*. In this, he advocated major changes in U.S. nuclear weapons policy, arguing that:

The time is right for a fundamental rethinking of the role of nuclear weapons in national defense and of the composition of our nuclear forces. The Cold War is over, but it has been replaced by new threats to our national security.<sup>64</sup>

Younger argues that the United States is now less secure, as the stable deterrence relationship of the Cold War has been replaced with a multipolar world, with security threats coming from anywhere and everywhere mixed with the proliferation of NBC technologies and their means of delivery. He argues that conventional weapons may be sufficient to deter or destroy some threats, but that nuclear weapons will be necessary for others.

Nuclear weapons pack an incredible destructive force into a small, deliverable package. In addition to their psychological deterrent value, they are the only means of holding at risk several classes of targets.<sup>65</sup>

Younger argues that these include mobile targets such as missile launchers, but also deeply buried hardened targets. He goes on to argue that an arsenal of precision-delivered, low-yield nuclear weapons would be suitable for this task, and that:

...the United States has a large archive of previously tested designs that might be fielded with reasonable confidence to meet evolving military needs. In addition, the current stockpile has significant flexibility for modification for new requirements. Such flexibility was most recently evidenced by the modification of the B61 bomb to provide earth-penetrating capability.<sup>66</sup>

Younger finally recommends that a smaller arsenal with a greater emphasis on these low-yield weapons will be necessary. This would help maintain U.S. security for the foreseeable future. He argues that such weapons will do more for U.S. security than the maintenance of a large arsenal of high-yield, strategic nuclear forces that have been characteristic of the weapons deployed under traditional deterrence doctrines. As noted earlier, Younger is now head of DTRA, and is therefore in a position to pursue development of the policies he called for while at Los Alamos.

Younger fails to analyze any consequences of his suggested policies. He does not take into account the possibility that potential foes of the United States may choose to develop nuclear weapons to inoculate themselves against potential U.S. nuclear use. He also fails to account for the likely effect on the non-proliferation regime of a new generation of U.S. nuclear weapons development and deployment. Younger further ignores the likely hostile international reaction to nuclear use by the United States.

Despite these limitations, Younger is not alone in his point of view. One very notable contribu-

<sup>64</sup> Younger, Stephen M., Executive Summary, *Nuclear Weapons in the Twenty-First Century*, LAUR-00-2850, June 27, 2000.

<sup>65</sup> Nuclear Weapons Related Technology, *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*



tion to the debate is the report *Rationale and Requirements for U.S. Nuclear Forces and Arms Control*, published in January 2001 by the National Institute for Public Policy (NIPP). This report is especially significant, as many of its authors have now entered the Bush administration. It is widely regarded as the blueprint for the *Nuclear Posture Review*.<sup>67</sup>

The NIPP report is a detailed analysis of the current state of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, and nuclear weapons use policy, with recommendations for future changes to meet the new strategic situation. The authors stress that:

Nuclear weapons can... be used in counterforce attacks that are intended to neutralize enemy military capabilities, especially nuclear and other NBC weapons forces. The purpose of a counterforce strategy is to deter aggression, coerce compliance, and limit the damage that enemy forces can inflict.<sup>68</sup>

The NIPP report notes that while the difference between strategic nuclear forces and theater or tactical nuclear forces was stark during the Cold War, this is unlikely to be true in the new strategic context:

...the number and mix of dual-capable systems and theater nuclear forces the United States and opponents maintain is likely to affect U.S. "strategic" nuclear requirements. U.S. strategic nuclear weapons requirements could, for example, decrease if the U.S. possessed robust theater capabilities...<sup>69</sup>

The report further argues that, given the rapidly changing strategic context of the post-Cold

War world, the United States must maintain a dynamic and flexible nuclear arsenal.

If the United States wishes to maintain an appropriately sized nuclear arsenal, it must be prepared to adapt that arsenal over time to dynamic strategic and foreign policy requirements. This adaptability in the post-Cold War period is absolutely critical because even the most basic of factors driving U.S. requirements are subject to unprecedented change.... Rather than focusing on the codification of a specific numeric goal expected to be valid over time, it would be wise for the United States to maintain the *de jure* prerogative to adjust its nuclear forces to coincide with changes in strategic requirements.... Maintaining the legal prerogative and *de facto* capability to match nuclear capabilities with need over the long term is vital...<sup>70</sup>

The NIPP report suggests that the needs of U.S. national security override the importance of an international treaty regime to reduce nuclear weapons and build nuclear stability. It states that the United States should not be constrained in its actions by treaties, but should act unilaterally. In this, the ideas from the NIPP report are at the core of current doctrine.

The report goes on to emphasize the need for adaptability in nuclear policy. Noting that adversaries to be deterred now include "rogue states," NIPP says that "The new features of the post-Cold War period greatly magnify the challenges of deterrence."<sup>71</sup> The authors argue that concerns about the effectiveness of deterrence "... suggests that, to the extent feasible, the United States should prepare for deterrence failure even as it

<sup>67</sup> Amongst the authors, Dr. Stephen Cambone is now Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Stephen J. Hadley is Deputy National Security Adviser, Robert G. Joseph, the head of proliferation strategy at the National Security Council, and William Schneider Jr., a key Bush defense adviser.

<sup>68</sup> Payne, Keith, et al, *Rationale and Requirements for U.S. Nuclear Forces and Arms Control*, NIPP, January 2001, p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

strives to deter.”<sup>72</sup> In other words, the United States must prepare to fight a war with nuclear weapons. A break with the past is the assumption that deterrence will fail, and that the U.S. must be ready to strike first to destroy any potential enemy NBC weapons targets. This policy is difficult to reconcile with the laws of war, and likely to have dire political consequences. An intelligence failure in identification of NBC weapons targets on the scale of Iraq could make the ramifications of such a nuclear use policy disastrous for U.S. and allied interests. (See Chapter Seven.)

Many of the ideas in the NIPP report are now being implemented, and the reaction from the international community has been almost uniformly negative. The NPT PrepComs in 2002 and 2003 saw a rising tide of anger with U.S. policies, and a lack of willingness to cooperate with U.S. initiatives. There is mounting evidence that hawkish nuclear policies are counterproductive to wider American interests in non-proliferation. (See Chapter Eight.)

Ideas about the changing role of nuclear forces also have featured in reports to former administrations. One example is the report of the *Defense Science Board Task Force on Nuclear Deterrence*, published in 1998. This report states that “proliferant nations with NBC capability” are a significant future threat, and that there is a “question of whether U.S. nuclear policy and forces (type and mix) provide credible deterrent against these emerging threats.”<sup>73</sup> The report recommends “formal direction to plan for active counter-proliferation,” matched with specialized weapons/tailored effects for our nuclear deterrent in the long term. According to the report, statements that U.S. nuclear weapons are a deterrent to other NBC weapons are not clear enough, and “Our declaratory policy needs to be less ambiguous and backed by defined requirements and focused operational readiness.”<sup>74</sup> Exactly the same senti-

ments had been expressed in 1995 by the authors of a RAND report on U.S. nuclear weapons use policy.<sup>75</sup>

This backing for what might be referred to as a distinctly American nuclear strategy is disturbing. American leadership has been integral to the success of the non-proliferation regime over the past forty years. It seems that many amongst the national security establishment have lost faith in that regime and are prepared to lead America away from it. The risk is that their fears could become self-fulfilling prophecies, with spiraling proliferation caused by U.S. withdrawal from global non-proliferation efforts and spurred by U.S. threats of nuclear use to counter that proliferation. The authors of the reports cited risk bringing about the state of the world they fear so much.

#### THE 2001 NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW

Where the Clinton administration allowed counterproliferation policy and nuclear doctrine to mix without any enthusiasm, the concept is central to the nuclear weapons thinking of the Bush administration. In late December 2001, the Bush administration delivered its Nuclear Posture Review to Congress. The results were then partially briefed to the media on January 9, 2002. Sections of the classified document were then leaked in March 2002.<sup>76</sup> This paper reflected much of the neo-conservative thinking, particularly that developed in the NIPP report, described in the previous section.

In the January 9 briefing, J.D. Crouch, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy, outlined the main elements of the NPR. He told media representatives that Russia was no longer a threat and that the danger of a prolonged war with a general nuclear exchange was a thing of the past. Instead, the main threat identified by the Pentagon is “... the growing capabilities of various states in the biological, chemi-

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Nuclear Deterrence*, October 1998, p. 16.

<sup>74</sup> All quotes in this paragraph, *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Gompert, D., Waterman, K., Wilkening, D., *U.S. Nuclear Declaratory Policy: The Question of Nuclear First Use*, RAND, 1995.

<sup>76</sup> The leaked paper can be found at [www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org), as of July 10, 2003.



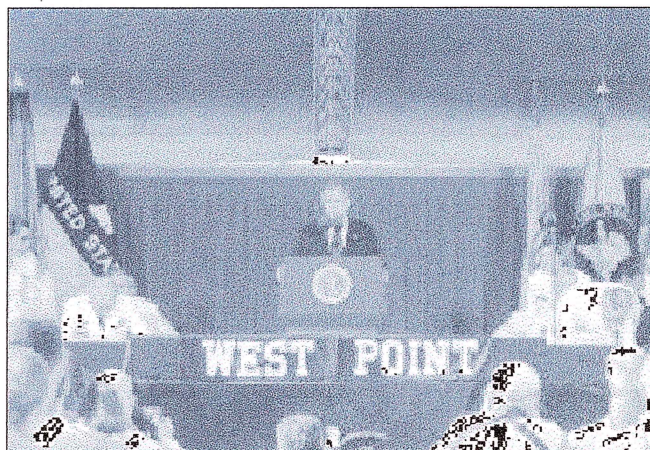
cal, nuclear and ballistic-missile delivery area. And obviously, we are also concerned explicitly about certain states that are developing those capabilities.”<sup>77</sup>

To counter these new threats, and to better adapt to the new security environment that he described, Crouch talked of the need to move to a “capabilities-based approach” which “argues that there may be multiple contingencies and new threats that we will have to deal with. We’re focusing on how we will fight.” Such capabilities-based planning is not country specific, but adaptive (drawing on a decade of previous experience), and includes non-nuclear as well as nuclear strike forces and “active and passive defenses.”<sup>78</sup>

Deterring these new threats relies, according to the administration, on four key principles. General Gordon, then-Director of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) described them in congressional testimony :

- assure allies and friends by demonstrating the United States’ steadiness of purpose and capability to fulfill its military commitments,
- dissuade adversaries from undertaking military programs or operations that could threaten U.S. interests or those of allies and friends,
- deter threats and counter coercion against the United States, its forces and allies, and
- defeat any adversary decisively and defend against attack if deterrence fails.<sup>79</sup>

Key to the new approach is the New Triad. Crouch indicated his hope that the mix of offensive and defensive capabilities in the New Triad would “... improve our capability to deter attack in the face of a proliferating NBC weapons capability.” In General Gordon’s words:



*President Bush speaking at West Point.*

In seeking to meet these goals, the NPR has established as its centerpiece a “New Triad” of flexible response capabilities consisting of the following elements:

- non-nuclear and nuclear strike capabilities including systems for command and control,
- active and passive defenses including ballistic missile defenses, and
- R&D and industrial infrastructure needed to develop, build, and maintain nuclear offensive forces and defensive systems.

Perhaps more so than in any previous defense review, this concept of a New Triad reflects a broad recognition of the importance of a robust and responsive defense R&D and industrial base in achieving our overall defense strategy.<sup>80</sup>

This represents a dangerous narrowing of the gap between nuclear and conventional military capabilities, as both are now held to have strate-

<sup>77</sup> Crouch, J. D., Special Briefing on the Nuclear Posture Review, ASD ISP, January 9, 2002.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Statement of General John A. Gordon, USAF (Ret.), Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, February 14, 2002.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*



gic functions as part of deterrence and once deterrence fails.

Crouch for the most-part dodged reporters' questions about the administration's plans to develop new class of miniaturized and more usable nuclear devices. The Pentagon's plans were revealed in some greater detail in the leaking of selected parts of the text and in press

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reports based on the leaked NPR. These details belie President Bush's repeated assertions that nuclear weapons are "relics of the Cold War" and his policy of reduced reliance on nuclear weap-

ons. The leaked document makes it clear that the administration instead plans to develop and define new roles for these weapons of ultimate destruction, making the idea of their use in conflict more commonplace.

In the classified NPR obtained by the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times*, the Pentagon outlines a list of contingencies and targets where nuclear weapons might be used. Listing seven countries — China, Russia, Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya and Syria — as potential nuclear targets, the leaked NPR indicates that nuclear weapons could be used in three types of situations: against targets able to withstand non-nuclear attack; in retaliation for attack with nuclear, biological or chemical weapons; or "in the event of surprising military developments." According to the scenarios outlined in the NPR, the Pentagon should be prepared to use nuclear weapons during an Arab-Israel conflict, an Iraqi attack on Israel, or its neighbors, a North Korean attack on South Korea or a military confrontation between

China and Taiwan (a scenario in which Chinese leaders may try to forcefully integrate Taiwan with the mainland China). Countries such as Iran, Syria and Libya could be involved in immediate, potential or unexpected contingencies requiring "nuclear strike capabilities." The United States also should be prepared to launch a nuclear strike to destroy stocks of weapons of mass destruction, such as biological and chemical arms.<sup>81</sup>

Additional detail has been provided by congressional testimony from members of the administration. For example, a key hearing was held in the Senate Armed Service Committee on February 14, 2002. Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, told the hearing that:

Instead of our past primary reliance on nuclear forces for deterrence, we will need a broad array of nuclear, non-nuclear and defensive capabilities for an era of uncertainty and surprise. The United States will transform its strategic planning from an approach that has been based almost exclusively on offensive nuclear weapons, to one that also includes a range of non-nuclear and defensive capabilities. In particular, because deterrence will function less predictably in the future, the United States will need options to defend itself, its allies and friends against attacks that cannot be deterred.<sup>82</sup>

From this, and other statements, it is clear that significant figures in the Bush administration regard the failure of deterrence and the use of nuclear weapons as becoming ever more likely. The threshold of nuclear weapons use seems more likely to be crossed now than at any time since the United States and the Soviet Union constructed a (more or less) stable deterrent relationship. This uncertainty is disturbing to allies and potential foes alike, and seems likely to do more

<sup>81</sup> *Nuclear Posture Review, op. cit.*

<sup>82</sup> Feith, Douglas, Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to receive testimony on the results of the Nuclear Posture Review, in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2003, February 14, 2002.

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to undermine international security and progress towards non-proliferation than anything else. (See Chapter Eight.)

### SHIFTING NATO POLICY AND DOCTRINE

NATO has adopted counterproliferation as a policy, although with at least initial reluctance. The Alliance also has adapted its nuclear use doctrines and practices to accommodate changes in U.S. strategy. If the United States is not to be forced to act alone, then support from NATO nations is likely essential. Few others are capable of operating alongside the American military. While a nuclear or conventional counterproliferation strike could be launched from U.S. territory, many of the possible targets are on the periphery of NATO. It would, at the least, be advantageous to have NATO support for attacks in the region. The United States sought support for the strike on Libya in 1986. Even an administration with many senior members wedded to unilateral action felt the need to seek NATO support for the invasion of Iraq, and would likely feel constrained to do so again. This places some limits on U.S. counterproliferation efforts (and for a less aggressive administration the restraints would be greater). This is particularly true where this might involve a nuclear strike, as these policies and ideas remain deeply controversial in Europe.

#### *NATO and Counterproliferation*

When briefed at an informal defense ministers meeting in September 1993 just before the launch of the Defense Counterproliferation Initiative, European allies were said to be "lukewarm" in their response.<sup>83</sup> Despite this, NATO agreed to begin consideration of the adoption of counterproliferation as an alliance mission at its Brussels Summit in January 1994. The Summit reemphasized the conclusions of the 1991 Summit on the threat to

the Alliance from the proliferation of NBC weapons, and further decided to consider political and military measures to combat this threat.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means constitutes a threat to international security and is a matter of concern to NATO. We have decided to intensify and expand NATO's political and defence efforts against proliferation, taking into account the work already underway in other international fora and institutions. In this regard, we direct that work begin immediately in appropriate fora of the Alliance to develop an overall policy framework to consider how to reinforce ongoing prevention efforts and how to reduce the proliferation threat and protect against it.<sup>84</sup>

These decisions came despite initial allied reluctance over counterproliferation, and indeed to this day NATO does not officially refer to its counterproliferation activities under that name. The 1994 Summit launched a project by the Senior Defence Group on Proliferation (DGP) to establish NATO policies in the area of counterproliferation. That process led to the approval of force goals for NATO nations by defense ministers at their meeting in December 1996. By 1999, counterproliferation formed part of the NATO strategic concept. Recognizing that proliferation is a threat to NATO nations, and that threat is manifest in NATO's periphery of North Africa, the Middle East and the former Soviet Union, the Strategic Concept states that, "The principal non-proliferation goal of the Alliance and its members is to prevent proliferation from occurring or, should it occur, to reverse it through diplomatic means."<sup>85</sup> This is a reflection of European reluc-

<sup>83</sup> Larsen, Jeffrey A., *NATO Counterproliferation Policy: A Case Study in Alliance Politics*, Occasional Paper #17, Air Force Academy Institute for National Security Studies, November 1997.

<sup>84</sup> "Declaration of the Heads of State and Government, "Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 10-11 January 1994," para. 17.

<sup>85</sup> "The Alliance's Strategic Concept, Approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. on 23rd and 24th April 1999," para. 40.



tance to adopt counterproliferation as a policy. However, the Strategic Concept further states, ... that the Alliance's defence posture must have the capability to address appropriately and effectively the risks associated with the proliferation of NBC weapons and their means of delivery, which also pose a potential threat to the Allies' populations, territory, and forces. A balanced mix of forces, response capabilities and strengthened defences is needed..."<sup>86</sup>

By 2002 and the Prague Summit, NATO counterproliferation policy was extended to cover threats from non-state actors.

Recalling the tragic events of 11 September 2001 and our subsequent decision to invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, we have approved a comprehensive package of measures, based on NATO's Strategic Concept, to strengthen our ability to meet the challenges to the security of our forces, populations and territory, from wherever they may come. Today's decisions will provide for balanced and effective capabilities within the Alliance so that NATO can better carry out the full range of its missions and respond collectively to those challenges, including the threat posed by terrorism and by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.<sup>87</sup>

NATO has fully integrated counterproliferation into its force planning, training, and its strategic concept and related papers. The two differences between NATO and U.S. national policy are that

NATO has not openly assigned its forces a preventive or preemptive role in counterproliferation, nor has it explicitly given a role to nuclear weapons in counterproliferation. Despite this, the process of adopting this new doctrine into the Alliance strategic concept has led to the adaptation of NATO nuclear policy and operational practice.

#### *Changes in NATO Nuclear Policies and Operational Practice*

NATO doctrine has been adapted, as has operational practice, to accommodate the expansion of the range of possible targets and the range of possible enemies to be deterred by nuclear weapons. U.S. policy on the use of nuclear weapons in regional wars also has had its influence on cooperation with allies. Changes in NATO policy, doctrine and practice are significant as the United States supplies some allies with nuclear weapons, and trains the armed forces of these allies to carry out nuclear weapons missions in a process known as nuclear sharing.<sup>88</sup> These doctrinal changes affecting nuclear cooperation within NATO, and particularly the nuclear sharing programs, are controversial and barely acknowledged in public.

NATO policy began to shift early in the 1990s, led by the changes in U.S. policy. In 1992, Volker Ruhe, then — German Defense Minister, told a press conference at the October NATO Nuclear Planning Group that, "There are no more nuclear weapons aimed at any threat. These weapons insure us against risks which might arise from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."<sup>89</sup>

NATO nuclear doctrine traditionally develops in line with changes in U.S. doctrine. With the adoption of the revision to NATO strategy, laid

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, Paragraph 53 h, The Alliance's Strategic Concept, Approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. on 23rd and 24th April 1999.

<sup>87</sup> Prague Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Prague on 21 November 2002," para. 3.

<sup>88</sup> The nuclear sharing nations are Turkey, Greece, Italy, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. In addition, U.S. nuclear weapons for U.S. forces with NATO missions are stored in the U.K. and Germany. Full details of the nuclear sharing programs can be found in Butcher, M. Nassauer, O., Padberg, T., and Plesch, D., *Questions of Command and Control: NATO, Nuclear Sharing and the NPT*, PENN Research Report 2000.1, March 2000.

<sup>89</sup> Ruhe, Volker, Statement to Press Conference at NATO Nuclear Planning Group, Gleneagles, October 21, 1992.

out in the document MC400/1<sup>90</sup> in 1996, NATO no longer maintains detailed plans for the use of nuclear weapons in specific scenarios. Instead, like the U.S., it is developing a so-called “adaptive targeting capability.” This capability is designed to allow major NATO commanders to develop target plans and nuclear weapons employment plans on short notice, during a contingency or crisis, from pre-developed databases containing possible targets.

Concerns have been raised that NATO is adopting U.S. policies on using nuclear weapons against proliferant states which possess, or potentially possess, NBC weapons. This is much more controversial in Europe than in the United States, not least because of the proximity of such states to Europe and the likely environmental and human health effects on European populations if such weapons were to be used against, for example, Libya. This has meant that statements of NATO policy are far more opaque than related American statements. As the Project on European Nuclear Non-Proliferation (PENN) noted in a 2000 report:

These concerns [over U.S. nuclear use policy] are prompted by Paragraph 41 of the Alliance’s Strategic Concept which states that: “By deterring the use of NBC weapons, they [Alliance forces] contribute to Alliance efforts aimed at preventing the proliferation of these weapons and their delivery means.”

If “Alliance forces” in the above text were to include both conventional and nuclear forces, NATO would have prepared the ground for an extension of the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy in the

future. NATO would in that case see nuclear weapons as a tool in the fight against proliferation. This formula would appear to leave the door open to the use of nuclear weapons against those possessing, or even thought to possess, nuclear or other NBC weapons and their means of delivery, a doctrine the United States is widely believed to have already adopted in U.S. national nuclear strategy. U.S. spokesmen refuse to rule out the use of nuclear weapons against potential adversaries who use, or threaten the use, of nuclear weapons or other NBC weapons, even non-state actors. The United States aims to have national doctrine incorporated into NATO policy, and historical precedent makes this a likely development.<sup>91</sup>

Ministers adopted the next revision of the NATO strategy implementation paper, MC400/2 in May 2000 at the North Atlantic Council meeting in Italy. According to a Reuters report<sup>92</sup>, the document states that “an appropriate mix of forces” – i.e. conventional and nuclear forces – should be available to the Alliance when facing a threat by any NBC weapons. This ambiguity would allow the United States to interpret NATO strategy as being in line with U.S. national doctrine. It is ambiguous enough to allow others to claim that this is not the case. However, interpretation may now be less necessary. According to the leaked *Nuclear Posture Review*, in 2002, following the Bush administration policy shift, the Alliance was engaged in a review of its nuclear posture.

The results of this review were reported to ministers at the June 2002 Nuclear Planning Group. The only indication of the review was the declaration by defense ministers that “NATO’s

<sup>90</sup> The MC400 series of papers are adopted by the NATO Military Committee. They are implementation plans for the published Strategic Concept of the Alliance.

<sup>91</sup> PENN Research Report 2000.1, op. cit., Chapter Three: NATO Nuclear Doctrine Since the End of the Cold War, Changes in NATO Nuclear Strategy in 1999.

<sup>92</sup> Taylor, Paul, “Analysis – NATO Accused of Widening Nuclear Role,” *Reuters News Service*, March 14, 2000.



sub-strategic nuclear forces have been reduced by over 85 percent since 1991, and are maintained at the minimum level sufficient to preserve peace and stability. In this context, we provided guidance to further adapt NATO's dual-capable aircraft posture."<sup>93</sup> It is unclear what this means in the context of the current debate, but knowledgeable observers have speculated that a reactivation of nuclear storage capacity on NATO's southern flank is possible, thus basing dual-capable aircraft (DCA) closer to potential NBC weapons targets in regions of concern on Europe's periphery. No NATO spokesman has ever denied this interpretation.

It seems that the MC400 series of papers has not yet been revised to explicitly allow for preemptive nuclear strikes against NBC weapon states, or non-state actors. Such changes as have been made would allow the United States to say that NATO policy and doctrine have been aligned with U.S. strategy papers. It also seems that NATO has yet to completely revise operational procedure in line with U.S. doctrine, a step that is controversial for European NATO nations, and for Canada. One senior European diplomat told the author that "If you think we are going to let the Americans throw nuclear weapons around on Europe's periphery, then you must be crazy." Canadian diplomats at the 2003 PrepCom for the 2005 NPT Review Conference reacted badly to NGO suggestions that NATO had adopted the U.S. practice of targeting all NBC weapons with nuclear weapons. In a statement to the conference, Canada stated that:

As a non-nuclear weapon State member of NATO, Canada takes this opportunity to affirm that the 1999 Strategic Concept has not been re-opened and remains the base for NATO's nuclear policy. Nor is it NATO policy that nuclear weapons may

be used against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, except as provided in the language of the Negative Security Assurances affirmed in 1995.<sup>94</sup>

According to the Centre for European Security and Disarmament (CESD), a Brussels-based research and advocacy group, despite this European and Canadian reluctance, the United States already has attempted to integrate preemptive conventional and possibly nuclear strikes into a NATO exercise scenario, but met with strong resistance from all other NATO nations except Turkey. The exercise, Crisis Management Exercise or CMX 2002, was the first designed to test allied reaction to a potential NBC weapons strike against a member state (in this case Turkey) from 'Amberland' (based on Iraq). The scenario began 100 days into the crisis with an attack looming. CESD notes that:

...serious disagreements arise between Allies over the appropriate response to the situation. The Military Committee is tasked with providing a list of recommendations for military options, but eventually is unable to do so. Capitals cannot agree on what the priorities should be and demand that political considerations be taken into account. The range of alternatives available are narrowed down to two main options: either carry out a pre-emptive strike with conventional weapons, or embark on an active information policy which delivers a threat of heavy and swift response if Amberland attacks Turkey. The United States and Turkey reportedly take a more hard line stance in support of pre-emptive strikes, while Germany, France and Spain prefer to defuse the crisis through more political means. Many NATO members see

<sup>93</sup> Final Communiqué, Ministerial Meeting of the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group, Brussels June 6, 2002.

<sup>94</sup> Canadian Statement to Cluster 1 Debate, NPT Second PrepCom for 2005 Review Conference, May 1, 2003.



the practical benefits of a pre-emptive strike, but warn that such an action could trigger an escalation of the crisis. By the end of the seven-day exercise, the United States and Turkey declare themselves ready for pre-emptive air strikes. The exercise ends before any attack is carried out or Article V is officially declared.<sup>95</sup>

In fact, the NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson was forced to step in and shut down the exercise early in order to prevent open conflict emerging between allies. It is clear from this scenario that European leaders continue to prefer to rely on non-proliferation diplomacy to prevent the spread of these weapons, believing that an emphasis on preparing to fight NBC weapons with nuclear forces is a mistake and the preemptive strikes, nuclear or conventional, are untenable politically. This position has only been reinforced in European reaction to the publication of the *National Security Strategy* and the *National Strategy to Combat WMD*:

It is still unclear how the organisation [NATO] could actually contribute were the U.S. to decide to take pre-emptive action. At the moment, there is some agreement among NATO insiders that that 'the Alliance will not be the primary vehicle to carry out such an initiative.' One official points out that 'even if there was evidence that a rogue state was imminently launching an attack with NBC weapons, the Allies would not be able to do anything and the U.S. would have to go it alone. At best, NATO could give political support or another invocation of Article V.'

or  
with the

In NATO's last crisis management exercise (CMX 2002), NATO tested its response to a scenario in which a Middle Eastern country was ready to attack Turkey with biological and chemical weapons, and in which bio-terrorist attacks had already been carried out on NATO territory. Facing the reluctance of the other Allies to agree on pre-emptive action, the United States and Turkey declared themselves ready for such strikes, with or without the participation of others. The demonstrated lack of cohesion among the Allies, coupled with NATO's cumbersome decision-making process, has most likely led the United States to confirm that during a real crisis, operating through the Alliance would not be efficient.<sup>96</sup>

U.S. efforts to fully integrate American doctrine into NATO run counter to the traditional NATO approach that nuclear weapons have a political function. Traditional communiqué language concerning the role of nuclear weapons in the Alliance was reaffirmed in 2002:

We reaffirmed that the fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Allies is political: to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war. We continue to place great value on the nuclear forces based in Europe and committed to NATO, which provide essential political and military linkage between the European and the North American members of the Alliance.<sup>97</sup>

In this perspective, the tensions between U.S. and European views on how best to resolve risks

<sup>95</sup> Monaco, Annalisa and Riggle, Sharon, "NATO Squares Off with Middle East Foe: Threat of WMD Challenges Alliance," in *NATO Notes*, Vol 4., No. 2, March 1, 2002. Published by CESD.

<sup>96</sup> Monaco, Annalisa, "The U.S. new strategic doctrine: A likely row with transatlantic partners?" in *NATO Notes*, Vol. 4, no. 6, July 25, 2002. Published by CESD.

<sup>97</sup> "Final Communiqué, Ministerial Meeting of the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group held in Brussels on 6 June 2002."

and threats from proliferators will be hard to reconcile. Indeed this was the case in the run-up to war with Iraq. The split in NATO that delayed even defensive assistance to Turkey and denied use of Alliance assets in the invasion itself mirrored very closely the CMX2002 exercise difficulties.

The U.S. view that counterproliferation must be "...integrated into the doctrine, training, and equipping of our force and those of our allies to ensure that we can prevail in any conflict with WMD-armed adversaries..."<sup>98</sup> is controversial as no European nation can openly admit to preparations to fight and win nuclear war, or a war involving other NBC weapons. European NATO nations in particular cannot openly support the idea that nuclear weapons should be used against biological or chemical weapons-armed adversaries who lack nuclear weapons. Even the U.K. and France have moved slowly and cautiously towards an implicit acceptance of these concepts. In any case, in the Strategic Concept, in MC400/2 and in all statements and policy documents available to the public, NATO maintains an ambiguity that allows the United States to interpret the papers as supporting their own national policies and doctrines, and other NATO nations to deny that this is the case.

#### FRANCE AND THE U.K. – DOCTRINAL OPACITY ON NUCLEAR COUNTERPROLIFERATION

##### *French Policy*

If NATO as a whole is resistant to the direction of U.S. policy, then the U.K. and France as European nuclear powers are somewhat less so. Neither is yet ready to make a straightforward declaration assigning a preemptive counterproliferation role to their nuclear forces, but senior officials in both countries have spoken in somewhat opaque terms of a deterrence role for nuclear weapons against biological and chemical weapons.

In France, during much of the late 1980s and through the 1990s strategists debated a revision of French nuclear doctrine to allow for preemptive strikes and nuclear warfighting. Former President Francois Mitterrand opposed these ideas strongly during his time in office, but they have resurfaced in the years since.

Speaking in June 2001, current President Jacques Chirac stated that, "Our deterrent must also permit us to stand up to threats which regional powers in possession of weapons of mass destruction could bring to bear on our vital interests." He noted the threat from NBC-armed ballistic missiles, but stressed that while France possessed a credible deterrent it did not regard nuclear weapons as a deterrent against other weapons. However, he also stressed that he wished to remind his audience that French concepts of deterrence "...do not exclude the capacity to demonstrate to a future foe, at the appropriate moment, that our vital interests are in play and that we are determined to safeguard them." He then added that the future defense spending on French nuclear capabilities was intended to ensure that a credible deterrent was maintained "for all circumstances and whatever the location or nature of the threat."<sup>99</sup>

This rather vague formulation leaves open the possibility that France could use nuclear weapons against a state, or non-state actor armed with NBC weapons, including perhaps those armed only with chemical or biological weapons. It also, crucially, seems to leave in play the possibility that such use could be preemptive. The ambiguity in French policy is therefore purposely maintained. For example, at the G8 Summit at Evian in 2003, President Chirac said that:

A great deal of work has been done in the same spirit to ensure implementation of the initiative to prevent terrorist from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction,

<sup>98</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States*, September 20, 2002.

<sup>99</sup> Chirac, President Jacques, *Speech to the Institut des Hautes Etudes de Defense Nationale*, Ecole Militaire, Paris, June 8, 2001. Translation from the original by the author.



particularly the weapons stored in the former Soviet Union. France, along with its partners, is preparing several projects with Russia. More generally speaking, we shall discuss the critical issue of non-proliferation at Evian. Several countries are carrying out prohibited projects. We are not willing to accept this and **we shall act within the legitimate framework of international law** (Emphasis Added).<sup>100</sup>

This emphasis on international law has been widely interpreted as criticism of the American doctrine of preemption or preventive war, with particular reference to the invasion of Iraq. The truth is that France wants to keep its options open.

#### *British Policy*

? | The role of U.K. nuclear forces with regard to deterring NBC weapons threats from regional powers was established by then-Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind in 1993. His elaboration of U.K. nuclear doctrine, a rare event in itself for the U.K., set out a mission for the Trident nuclear ballistic missile force as a tactical nuclear weapon, one which could deter the use of chemical or biological weapons against the U.K. He had nothing to say about potential preemptive use of nuclear weapons. However, Geoff Hoon, current Defence Secretary, made a series of remarks in early 2002 that have been interpreted as aligning the U.K. with a U.S.-style doctrine for the preemptive use of nuclear weapons in counterproliferation missions. On March 20, 2002, Hoon told the Defence Select Committee of the House of Commons that:

The fact that if certain states of concern do acquire complete systems of sufficient range then they might be capable of targeting the United Kingdom within the next few years is something that we consider very seriously. Moreover, we recognise that some

states of concern would already be capable of targeting United Kingdom forces deployed in areas close to them and of targeting the territory of some of our friends and allies. We, therefore, believe that it is vital for all responsible nations to try to tackle the potential threat. We believe a comprehensive strategy is necessary, a strategy that encompasses diplomacy, arms control, conflict prevention, non-proliferation, counterproliferation, export controls, intelligence co-operation, law enforcement, deterrence and defensive measures.

Under questioning from Members of Parliament he further elaborated:

...that there are clearly some states who would be deterred by the fact that the United Kingdom possesses nuclear weapons and has the willingness and ability to use them in appropriate circumstances. States of concern, I would be much less confident about, and Saddam Hussein has demonstrated in the past his willingness to use chemical weapons against his own people. In those kinds of states the wishes, needs and interests of citizens are clearly much less regarded and we cannot rule out the possibility that such states would be willing to sacrifice their own people in order to make that kind of gesture.

They can be absolutely confident that in the right conditions we would be willing to use our nuclear weapons. What I cannot be absolutely confident about is whether that would be sufficient to deter them from using a weapon of mass destruction in the first place.<sup>101</sup>

In June 2002, the *Guardian* noted that the British government has put in place a plan to up-

<sup>100</sup> Chirac, President Jacques, *Speech to the G8 Summit*, Evian, May 21, 2003.

<sup>101</sup> Select Committee on Defence Minutes of Evidence, Examination of Witnesses (Questions 220-238), Rt Hon Geoffrey Hoon MP, Mr Brian Hawtin CB, March 20, 2002.

grade weapons design and production facilities at Aldermaston, the home of U.K. nuclear weapons. In that article, an anonymous Ministry of Defence (MoD) official agreed that Hoon had shifted U.K. policy dramatically:

The Aldermaston plan coincides with an apparent agreement to a radical shift in Britain's nuclear doctrine. The defence secretary, Geoff Hoon, has suggested the government would now be prepared to fire a nuclear weapon in a pre-emptive strike against non-nuclear states suspected of developing chemical and biological weapons. A senior defence official admitted Mr. Hoon had "gone further than people have before."<sup>102</sup>

While much of what Minister Hoon said is open to interpretation, it seems likely that a shift is underway in U.K. policy that makes nuclear use more likely, particularly in the light of U.K. involvement in a war on Iraq alongside the United States. U.K. doctrine has expanded to allow for preventive and preemptive military action against proliferants. The first example of such an operation was the invasion of Iraq. Whether the U.K. would be prepared to use nuclear weapons in such a mission remains an open question.

Prime Minister Tony Blair also has raised the possibility of UK nuclear use against chemical or biological weapons targets. In response to questioning in the House of Commons Liaison Committee in January 2003, he refused to rule the possibility out. Asked if UK policy might include a warning to Saddam that nuclear bombs could be used in the event of war, Blair said:

It is best to say that we are aware of the potential of that threat and we would deal with it in any way that we thought necessary. But I don't think it is wise for me to

get into speculating as to exactly what we are doing about it.<sup>103</sup>

While doctrine in Europe remains more opaque and more nuanced than in the United States, the two nuclear weapon states in Europe are clearly heavily influenced by the U.S. view of changing strategic circumstances. Their influence will also be felt in NATO. For the U.S., the support of the U.K. in counterproliferation missions is likely to be vital – at least as long as any administration wishes to be able to claim at least minimal international support. It seems that U.S. policy and doctrine is already producing a shift in other nations' policies that contributes to the undermining of the global non-proliferation regime. It has certainly contributed to a lack of unity amongst European members of NATO.

#### COUNTERPROLIFERATION AND THE EUROPEAN UNION – A MODERATE ALTERNATIVE

The European Union (EU) has a history of involvement in non-proliferation diplomacy dating back to 1990. Defense policy is a new area for the EU, and a very sensitive one. The European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) is still a work in progress. For this reason, the EU Strategy Against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, concluded in June 2003, is a much more nuanced document than even NATO policy. While headlines trumpeted the EU decision that the use of force could be allowed, in fact the major stress of the document is on reinforcing non-proliferation efforts. Accepting that NBC weapons can pose a threat to international peace especially in the hands of terrorists, the Strategy states that:

An EU strategy against the proliferation of WMD needs to be based on a common assessment of global proliferation threats. The EU Situation Centre has prepared and

<sup>102</sup> Norton-Taylor, Richard, "MoD plans £2bn nuclear expansion," *The Guardian*, June 18, 2002.

<sup>103</sup> Tempest, Matthew, "No way out for Saddam – Blair," *The Guardian*, January 21, 2003.