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Mr R.C. Mottram, DS 12

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- Copies to:
- Sir Antony Duff, FCO
  - Sir Clive Rose, Cabinet Office
  - Mr. Quinlan, DUS(P)
  - Mr. Bryars, AUD (D Staff)
  - Mr. Gooderham, DIS(CS)
  - Captain Pitt, DN Plans
  - Mr. Wilberforce, FCO

Dear Richard,

CRITERIA FOR DETERRENCE

Thank you very much for the second draft of the paper on Criteria. I attach my detailed proposed amendments but the following remarks may help to explain them.

2. On the assumption, agreed by the Group, that we are not trying to sell anything but to put the issues fairly before the Steering Committee and thence Ministers, I agree with the general thrust and tone of the paper. It does seem to agonise, but this is after all a most important subject, arguably the most important in the defence field, and the arguments must not be too much elided.

3. That said, I think it would be well to avoid the jargon of deterrence whenever we can; the appearances of the well-known Ability family (cap, vi and cred) are rather frequent. Though they are sometimes unavoidable terms of art, they do tend to make a paper difficult to read and sometimes can be used to cover imprecise thought. For these reasons, in my experience, Ministers tend to shy at them.

4. Inevitably, there are some places where the draft seems to me to be too dogmatic and others where it is too cautious. Those, in particular, concern the effects of deterrence on others. It will I hope be apparent that many of my proposed changes aim to take account of such points.

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5. The above are points of emphasis and wording. My main concern is not quite so easily covered by amendments. Put briefly, it is that the interdependence of the four purposes of the UK deterrent is not sufficiently brought out. I except the fourth, political purpose, where its relationship with the other three does come through very clearly. But in my view the crucial connection is between the second and third pillars - the "second centre of decision making" and the "national last resort" - which do in practice merge into each other yet in the draft receive such different treatment that they might almost be thought mutually exclusive. Maybe the critical point at which they meet is the effect of a medium power deterrent on the strategy of superpower opponent, superpower ally, and other allies. This is the fulcrum of the whole argument and it does not seem to me to stand out very strongly in the draft. Perhaps - and this is a rather wild thought - it is what we really mean by the "trigger."

6. Before putting forward what would have to be a major amendment, I should like to hear whether other members of the Group have a similar difficulty. If they do not, I defer. In the meantime I have put forward a rewrite of para 18 which goes only a short step in the direction indicated.

7. I am sorry this has been so much delayed. I have been away in the other two-thirds of my parish.

Yours  
Richard Hill

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO DS 12 PAPER ON  
"CRITERIA FOR DETERRENCE"

Para 2 line 7 delete "for example."

Para 2 line 10 Before "aggression" insert "similar."

Para 3 line 1 Before "to provide" insert "necessarily."

Para 3 line 9 Delete "execute" and substitute "exact"  
Delete "quickly."

Para 4 line 1 After "made" insert "in the planning stage."

Para 4 lines 2 - 3 Delete "unless ..... failed."

Para 5 lines 1 - 3 Delete "Deterrence ..... threatened. But"

Para 5 lines 3 - 7 Delete "it must ..... weakened" and substitute "It must however be recognised that, if the deterrer sees limitations in his capability, they may undermine his confidence in the threat he is posing so that it loses credence in his own eyes; if this becomes apparent to his opponent, deterrence is substantially weakened."

Para 6 line 9 Start a new paragraph at "In the first case."

Para 6 line 11 Delete all after "kind," and substitute "an assurance to this effect forms part of the UK's arms control policy, though it has not yet been promulgated in terms. Nevertheless it is likely that the fear of nuclear riposte might loom in the minds of non-nuclear opponents, to a degree that is difficult to calculate."

Para 7a line 5 After "options" insert "even"

Para 7a lines 12 - 15 Delete "the case..... vulnerable", and substitute "by a medium power seeking to deter a superpower. Even less than a superpower can a medium power hope to negate the threat of superpower retaliation in this way; on the other hand its own retaliatory capacity in the face of a threat of superpower first use may be vulnerable."

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Para 7b line 4 Delete "would" and substitute "tends to."

Para 7b line 6 Before "would be irrational" insert "can be argued that it."

Para 9 lines 1 - 5 Delete all before "nuclear" and substitute "When a sequence of this sort between powers with broadly equivalent strategic forces is read back into deterrent terms, the risks from escalation are clearly such that they impose a powerful sanction on both sides against crossing the nuclear threshold. Nuclear weapons would deter attacks involving nuclear weapons but initiation of their use in a conventional conflict would be less credible in many cases"

Para 13 line 1 Delete "need to" and substitute "now"

Para 14 line 1 Delete "48" and substitute "16"

Para 14 line 5 Delete "400" and substitute "240"

Para 14 line 16 Add ", though it is significant in its second-strike context."

Para 15 line 3 Delete "confidence" and substitute "certainty."

Para 15 line 4 After "involved in" insert "nuclear."

Para 15 line 10 Delete "the vital interests of the United States are" and substitute "this vital interest of the United States is."

Para 15 line 11 Delete "conventional"

Para 15 lines 12 - 14 Delete "The overriding .... escalation" and substitute "It would therefore be a United States objective, in all circumstances short of a direct attack on American territory, to avoid nuclear escalation."

Para 16 line 10 After "affected" insert "The European members of the Alliance have proved themselves very sensitive to any suspicion that the US deterrent was being "decoupled" from NATO's strategy; this sensitivity is apparent now in the context of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks."

Para 17 line 2 After "depend" insert "partly."

Para 17 line 4 Delete "and of ..... power."

Para 17 line 6 Delete "in the NATO case."

Para 17 lines 10 - 12 Delete "the front...conflict in."  
After "interest" insert "in many conflicts."

Para 18 lines 1 - 2 Delete "An opponent.....posed: a" and substitute "But an opponent would also have to calculate the reality of the threat posed by an additional nuclear power, in two aspects: first,"

Para 18 line 4 Delete "b." and substitute "secondly,"

Para 18 lines 8 - 21 Delete "The trigger" ..... aggression" and substitute. "The 'trigger' argument presupposes a degree of desperation in the UK's position which could lead the UK to threaten unilateral nuclear use. The effect of this threat on the Soviet Union would be less important than its effect on the United States. The prospect of the resultant confusion and uncertainty might be so daunting to the US that they would bring additional pressure (diplomatic, military or even limited nuclear, but in any case backed by their full strategic power) to bear against the Soviet Union. The possibility of such interactions could have important effects on Russian calculations of the likely outcome of aggression, and by extension on the resolve of the European NATO nations to resist aggression."