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D/DIS/13/1/6

DIRECTORATE OF
21/9/13

20 JAN 1978

NAVAL PLANS

DS 12 - Mr Mottram

CRITERIA FOR DETERRENCE

1. You have asked in particular for DIS comment on paragraphs 10 and 13 of your draft. In paragraph 10 I believe that a short statement on Soviet policies would be useful but I suggest that the point would be adequately covered by your text omitting the first, second and last sentences and by amending the phrase "rather than ... control" in lines 8-9 to read "using whatever weapons are necessary". On your first sentence I am not sure that the issue could be clarified by such evidence. A distinction must be made between declared policy and the implications which may be drawn by commentators. You have to some extent blurred this distinction in paragraph 9 since your first proposition represents official US policy and the second the assessment of non-official observers - which may or may not get more truly to the heart of the matter. The quite extensive Soviet comment on the 1974 US selective targetting doctrine has been exclusively concerned with the proposition that this makes the use of nuclear weapons more likely and lowers the nuclear threshold. To this extent one might argue that the NATO debate has raised the credibility of the deterrent. However once again one is faced by the possible division between an official statement - which is the only comment allowed to be published in the USSR - and the private thoughts of analysts and indeed policy-makers. On your second sentence I suggest the evidence is less conflicting than you imply, especially if the conventional level is included. There is ample proof to show that, perhaps independently, perhaps in reaction to MC 14/3, the Warsaw Pact since the middle-late 1960s has prepared for a possible initial conventional phase to fighting in Europe. We also believe, on less firm evidence, that the USSR makes a distinction between theatre use of nuclear weapons and the intercontinental strategic exchange. The real obscurity is over the scale of employment once nuclear release has been authorised. There is certainly no evidence for limited or demonstrative use. We assess that these weapons would be used at the level necessary to ensure military success but this phraseology should not be read to imply necessarily indiscriminate blanket bombing of the entire area of NATO Europe. It follows from this that we do not accept that the Russians are not concerned with escalation control, they are certainly concerned to avoid escalation - which may be in technical strategic theory language not quite the same thing. Hence the proposed amended phrase. On your last sentence I doubt whether we would get firm evidence of Russian risk-taking until they actually did something. However, they follow Western policy debates very closely and it is quite apparent that they have appreciated that the 1950s US doctrine of massive retaliation against Russian territory in response to any hostile act anywhere in the world is now quite dead. Their recent actions in Angola and Ethiopia demonstrate this.

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2. In paragraph 13 I would not suggest adding anything to the very reasonable general theoretical approach of your draft. The proposition must be true. There is in fact good evidence of Russian resistance to proliferation and above all to any prospect of an independent German deterrent. However, the UK and French capability has long since been accepted as a fact of life and now draws relatively little comment.

3. On other parts of your draft may I make the following general comments:

Para 2 There are presentational advantages in inverting the second sentence to make it positive and thus argue that for deterrence to work the threat must exceed the value placed by the adversary on his objectives.

Para 3 This would then lead naturally on to a discussion of escalation which raises the stakes until they exceed the expected benefits. Paragraph 3 might then begin with escalation and lead up to general nuclear war and the value of an assured second strike. Alternatively, at the least, I suggest you might use the words "strategic" nuclear in lines 3 and 5.

Para 20 Is there not a third area of particular importance, namely our standing and influence with the USSR in the light of our capability in the last resort to pose an effective strategic threat to its homeland. A fourth might be our status with the power which claims to be most concerned about the Soviet threat and thus seeks strong friends, namely China.

Chris Fordham
Head of DIS(JS)

20 January 1978

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DN Plans (Captain Pitt) ✓
PCO - Mr Wilberforce

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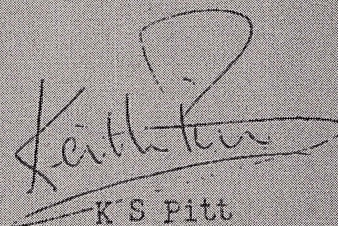
Paragraph 14. Is it that implausible that we would press the trigger if acting in concert with European NATO allies?

Paragraphs 15 & 16. I think it is necessary to define what is meant by "strategic capability". Surely no-one is going to move directly to an all-out nuclear attack. Paragraph 16 seems to have ignored the limited use of nuclear weapons by NWS other than the USA.

Paragraph 18. This paragraph also appears to ignore the scenario of European NATO allies attempting to force the hand of the US.

Paragraph 19. The present British strategic nuclear force (is this Polaris only or are you including Vulcans and Buccaneers?) is as much a political weapon as a military one. (Aren't they all? I hear you say). Can we restrict their use to specific scenarios when we cannot forecast when the politicians will wish to pose the threat to use them? Why not a Soviet attack in Western Europe? Somehow the concept of the difference between the deterrent requirements of a super-power and others needs to be worked into this paragraph. Is "the deterrent" (your term) just Polaris? We have the capability of limited nuclear strikes (given political will), is it necessary to "develop a concept"? The "uncertainty" factor will remain in defence of our European allies if NATO collapses. Any further defensive assistance is surely going to be subject to political will at the time and un-plannable in advance?

2. I hope these comments help. No doubt you will ignore them if they don't.



K S Pitt
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20 January 1978

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