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Ref 13-752 e & a

TOP SECRET UK EYES ONLY

ANNEX A TO
COS 45/72
(Continued)

52. This might, in certain circumstances, be defended. Were it to emerge that a permanently invulnerable deterrent were absolutely beyond this country's resources it would clearly be necessary to assess with great care whether the dangers we have described above were balanced by the advantages of staying, albeit vulnerable, in the nuclear business. A separate study has been commissioned on the so-called "Poor Man's Deterrent" showing the practical options which might exist. It can however certainly be argued that an occasional deterrent is more dangerous to the possessor than none at all.

53. The criterion of inducing in the enemy's mind sufficient belief that we might resort to strategic nuclear action depends, in the first instance, on the factor of political will. There is nothing useful to be said about this. It also depends, however, upon the potential enemy's knowledge that our control systems exist and are sufficient to give us the power of independent national action. Any United Kingdom deterrent force must include this capability.

54. Lastly, we consider, in the rest of this part of our paper, the very difficult question of the degree of damage which a potential enemy would regard as unacceptable.

Damage Infliction - Assessing the Prize

55. The level of effectiveness required, however difficult to establish, is crucial to determining quality and quantity and thus in establishing the cost of whatever system is selected. It is however so far impossible to establish any finite conclusions from the strategic systems which at present exist. We know the United States damage criterion; and we know that the Soviet Union have not undertaken major aggression. We do not know that the latter is a consequence of the former, and we do not know whether, if it is, any lower level of effectiveness would have deterred. The question may be expressed as "how many Soviet cities need to be able to be destroyed to achieve a deterrent effect?", and it is immediately clear that, since the answer essentially derives from assumptions about Soviet psychology it must be highly speculative. Yet much depends on it.

56. United States' calculations of the capability she requires have to be based on the possibility that the Russians might be prepared to run very high risks indeed, and to undergo a level of destruction which other countries would regard as unacceptable if in so doing she was able to eliminate the other nuclear super-power from the next few hundred years of world history; the United States thus feels that she needs to convince Russia beyond all possible doubt that if she attacked the continental United States, she would not survive as a nation to enjoy her "victory". The criterion of deterrence required by the United States has therefore been defined as the assured second strike capability necessary to destroy one fifth to one fourth of the population of the Soviet Union and one half of her industrial capacity, ie, a level of damage leading to chaos and progressive collapse from which no modern industrial country could recover. This requires hundreds of weapons.

A - 14

TOP SECRET UK EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET UK EYES ONLY

ANNEX A TO
COS 45/72
(Continued)

57. In Europe, however, the prizes for Russia are not so great and the stakes not so high; the objective is not all or nothing. Whatever risks Russia might calculate she would have to run in eliminating or absorbing Western Europe, she would still have to take into consideration the existence of the United States' retaliatory capability. Thus the criterion of deterrence for Europe needs to be based on a judgement of the value which at any time the Russians might attach to the prizes to be gained by attacking Europe and of the damage to their homeland they would be prepared to accept in the attempt. Since the advantage is obviously at a lower level than that offered by the destruction of the United States in a deliberate super-power confrontation, it is reasonable to suppose that the Soviet Union would not be prepared to accept as great a degree of damage.

58. However should the Soviet Union consider that the United States would be reluctant to conduct a suicidal escalation it can be argued that the prize - Europe, and the absolute security of the Soviet Western frontier - could be regarded by the Soviets as highly worthwhile. This fact suggests that even the minimum deterrent level required may be high.

Damage Infliction - Current Assessments

59. The United Kingdom judgement of the damage criterion derives from a JIC assessment of 1962 (4). This assessment was based on what the Soviet leaders would consider to be unacceptable damage on the premise that the latter would clearly be unwilling to accept such a degree of damage as would severely reduce the Soviet Union's economic and military strength in its struggle to overtake the United States and dominate the world. The JIC acknowledged that they could not give a clear cut answer, and had deliberately ignored the psychological, technical and political factors, but felt that it would not be unreasonable to say that the Soviet leaders would consider that the certain destruction of their five largest cities would put them at an unacceptable disadvantage in relation to the United States.

60. The selection of the five largest cities was made on a points system, points being awarded for the following:

- a. Size of population.
- b. Civil and administrative centres.
- c. Centres of economic control.
- d. Military command posts.
- e. Telecommunications centres.

On this basis Moscow was of the five and because of this the JIC assessment came to be known as the "Moscow Criterion."

Note:

4. JIC(A)(62)10.

Damage Infliction - Possible Options

61. The JIC assessment (4) remains the only official statement on the level of effectiveness required for deterrence. However other opinions have been expressed. For example it has been suggested that social and economic developments in the Soviet Union may have led to a greater regard for human life, and a lesser destruction level might deter. It has also been suggested, in a contrary sense, that proven Russian capability to suffer enormous casualties and material damage and yet continue at war indicates that a very much higher destruction level might be necessary. It is also argued that a limited destruction city attack would not render the USSR defenceless against American or Chinese attack and thus her deterrent remains effective.

62. We have no reason to believe that the JIC assessment has been invalidated by events. Nevertheless the last formal assessment was more than 10 years ago (although it was generally re-endorsed by DGI in May 1971), and we believe that the JIC should be invited to give their current opinion on certain specific points which bear particularly on our present decisions.

63. In assessing what specific targets should be included and, very particularly whether Moscow must be included, two factors become dominant.

64. First, there is the question of whether Moscow itself plays a unique part in the Soviet system. The City was automatically included in the previous JIC assessment, since it received so many "points" on all counts. It has been also suggested that as a centre of communication and Communist control it is unique, which might even suggest that to be able to destroy Moscow alone might suffice for deterrence.

65. While we believe that Moscow will continue to have a special significance in Russian eyes, the Soviet Union has put considerable money and effort into developing a military and political command system able to survive a nuclear attack, even though Moscow may have been destroyed. In military terms therefore the "Moscow Criterion" may well be of diminishing importance if interpreted as relating specifically to Moscow.

66. The second major factor in considering whether the destruction of Moscow or any other specific cities should necessarily be included in the deterrent capability for ballistic systems is the Soviet ABM defensive system which is, at present, deployed around Moscow. Whatever the present cover afforded by this system, it has a development potential which could protect large areas of Western Russia. This development could be realised even under a SAL regime.

67. It is in our view likely that if, in fact, the Soviet Union sought to augment its ABM system it would do so in such a way as to include certain cities deemed particularly vital. It seems to us that, by definition, a strategic nuclear capability which could penetrate Soviet ABM defences would be able to strike at certain targets which the Russians themselves would have implicitly defined as highly important to them. Although, therefore, it is impossible to see how their ABM or any other defensive systems might develop, the possibility exists that if we decide to dispense with the

Note:

4. JIC(A)(62)10.

A - 16

TOP SECRET UK EYES ONLY

ANNEX A TO
COS 45/72
(Continued)

capability to penetrate, we could find ourselves lacking the capability to strike targets of the sort which would certainly deter. This leads us to believe that, whatever the specific importance of Moscow, a United Kingdom strategic deterrent must have the capability to penetrate the appropriate Russian defensive systems.

68. Were we to lack this penetrative capability we cannot say, with certainty, that we would lack the capability to deter; some lesser capability, inflicting a sufficiently high level of damage outside whatever becomes the defended area of Russia, might very possibly deter. But we believe that it would be very difficult either to prove this proposition or to quantify it; while, conversely, we believe that if we possess the capability to penetrate the defences we shall possess the option to strike targets which prima facie will be considered of the highest importance by the Soviet Union itself. This penetrability, therefore, together with the "five city criterion" in terms of order of magnitude, should - failing any different JIC assessment - provide our guidance on the level of effectiveness required.

Deterrence against lesser powers

69. Although our review has considered exclusively deterrence to Soviet action, it has been assessed (5) that a modest increase to any future strategic force would probably suffice to provide the capability additionally to deter lesser powers from threat or blackmail, with the possible exception of China; alternatively the United Kingdom's tactical nuclear capability might be suitable for this purpose. The amount and type of damage required to deter China would need separate assessment if and when a threat to the United Kingdom from China is discerned. Any resulting requirement for a capability to deter China would have to be examined in the light of the strategic nuclear capability to be provided for the deterrence of the Soviet Union.

CONCLUSIONS

70. The main justification for the possession of a nuclear deterrent is to provide the ultimate guarantee of national security and sovereignty, and to protect national interests where conventional defences are no longer effective. Without it, the United Kingdom has no means of its own of deterring nuclear attack or large-scale conventional aggression by a nuclear power, and countering nuclear blackmail. We would view such a situation with the gravest misgivings.

Note:

5. LTWP Study Group 407/102/37/16/4980.

A - 17
TOP SECRET UK EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET UK EYES ONLY

ANNEX A TO
OS 45/72
(Continued)

71. A British deterrent force is of value in NATO in that it provides the Alliance with a European contribution to the overall deterrent, and a second centre of decision for nuclear retaliation. Other than France no European member possesses this capability. If a British deterrent force did not exist, the United States would have a monopoly of NATO's nuclear power. Conversely the necessity for such a European element becomes stronger as the American nuclear guarantee becomes progressively less credible.

72. In both contexts the value of the British deterrent depends upon the decision to use it remaining under unfettered national control, and for this to be clearly seen to be so. There is no justification for maintaining a force which is purely an adjunct to the United States' deterrent and the use of which is entirely under American control. Our present dependence on the United States for material assistance, and our reliance for intelligence, does not amount to control.

73. It is difficult to show that possession of a nuclear deterrent confers on Britain any special status world-wide. But it is unquestionable that our position in NATO and in Europe would be very different if we were not a nuclear power. It would be undesirable for France to be the only such power in Europe.

74. With regard to the likely attitude of our principal allies to the possession of our own nuclear capabilities:

a. The United States may come to welcome the strengthening of the European policy of the Alliance which a British capability helps to provide. This, however, has to be considered against possible United States' disenchantment with a capability for escalation to the strategic level which she herself cannot control.

b. Germany is likely to be much influenced by the attitude of the United States; she would not wish any development which either seemed to weaken United States' involvement in Europe, or appeared to portend an Anglo-French dominance of the Continent.

c. The attitude of France is likely to be guided by her self-interest in terms of possible collaboration, and her scepticism as to whether our nuclear capability could be regarded as significant in Allied terms.

75. As to the level of effectiveness required:

a. The force, and its system of control, must at all times be able to remain effective in the face of pre-emptive attack. The alternative would be to place absolute reliance on the factor of warning time.

A - 18

TOP SECRET UK EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET UK EYES ONLY

ANNEX A TO
GOS 45/72
(Concluded)

b. It must be capable of inflicting on Soviet Russia a level of damage which Soviet leaders would regard as unacceptable as the price for an aggression on the United Kingdom or her European allies. This level was defined in 1962 as the equivalent of the destruction of the five largest Russian cities. Although we have no reason to doubt the continuing validity of this criterion, we consider that it would now be timely to obtain comment on certain specific points.

c. Our assessment of the likely development of the Soviet defences (taking into account such limitations as may arise from a SAL agreement) leads us to conclude that we shall be unable to maintain this criterion in full unless our strategic nuclear force has the ability to penetrate to and strike certain targets within the Soviet defensive system, by whatever means, and that whatever the development of Soviet defences, this ability to penetrate must ensure for us an ability to strike what the Soviets themselves must regard as crucially worthy of defence. It thus becomes the principal criterion of effectiveness in considering the level of threat we should pose.