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NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 13

NUCLEAR WEAPONS EMPLOYMENT POLICY (TS)

The President has directed that the following will be US policy governing the deployment and employment of our nuclear forces and their acquisition. (e)

The most fundamental national security objective is to deter direct attack--particularly nuclear attack--on the United States and its Allies. Should nuclear attack nonetheless occur, the United States and its Allies must prevail. Our nuclear forces are of crucial importance both in the prevention of nuclear attack and in protecting our national interests at any level of nuclear conflict. (e)

Deterrence can best be achieved if our defense posture makes Soviet assessments of war outcomes, under any contingency, so uncertain and dangerous as to remove any incentive for initiating attack. This requires that we be convincingly capable of responding in such a way that the Soviets or other adversary would be denied their political and military objectives. Stated otherwise, we must be prepared to wage war successfully. Our nuclear forces (both the strategic Triad and theater forces), in conjunction with general purpose forces, must hold at risk the full range of enemy military capabilities that threaten the United States and its Allies. (S)

If deterrence fails, the employment of nuclear forces must be effectively related to the operations of our general purpose forces. Our doctrine for the use of forces in nuclear conflict must ensure that we can pursue specific objectives selected by the National Command Authority (NCA) at any given time, from general guidelines established in advance. (e)

These imperatives constitute the basis for the development of our nuclear forces and plans for their employment. We must effect substantial improvements in our forces and their supporting command, control and intelligence systems (C³I) to ensure requisite flexibility, endurance, and effectiveness in a nuclear war of indefinite duration. Our nuclear weapons employment policies and plans must evolve in parallel with the improvement of our force capabilities. The principles and goals hereunder should guide efforts in both areas. (e)

Basic Employment Objectives

The United States must be able to deny the Soviet Union a military victory at any level of conflict and force it to seek earliest termination of hostilities on terms favorable to the United States. To this end, we must have the capability to attack the widest range of targets in a way that serves our national interests, even when retaliating to a massive strike received without strategic warning; and, if necessary, to cripple the capability of the Soviet Union and its allies to conduct effective military operations. Plans for the employment of strategic nuclear forces must be integrated with employment planning for theater nuclear and other general purpose forces. (S)

Employment Planning

To accomplish nuclear employment objectives, pre-planned attack options against the Soviet Union and its allies will be developed with the following general order of priorities for weapon allocation:

- Strategic and theater nuclear forces and associated C³I;
- National-level political and military leadership and the associated control structure;
- All other military forces, stationary and mobile, and associated C³I;
- Industrial facilities which provide immediate support to military operations; and
- The industrial/economic base of the Soviet Union (and its allies). (TS)

Sub-options will be developed to permit selection of targets from among the foregoing categories. (S)

Options for attacking (1) the national-level political and military leadership and (2) the Soviet industrial/economic base (and that of their allies, as appropriate) will be designed to be withheld for a protracted period, to leave the Soviets with sufficient national control structure and industrial/economic resources at risk following counter-military attacks, so that they have a strong incentive to seek conflict termination short of an all-out attack on our cities and economic assets. (TS)

Methods of attack on specific targets should be chosen to limit collateral damage consistent with effective accomplishment of the attack objective. Where appropriate, overall plans should include the option of withholds to limit such collateral damage. (TS)

While it will remain our policy not to rely on launching our nuclear forces in an irrevocable manner upon warning that a Soviet missile attack has begun, we must leave Soviet planners with strong uncertainty as to how we might actually respond to such warning. And we must be prepared to launch our recallable bomber forces upon warning that a Soviet nuclear attack has been initiated. (TS)

In addition to pre-planned options, we must be able to develop, on short notice, immediate options for employment of nuclear forces, both strategic and theater, against targets of significant value (as, for example, ground formations) that emerge in the course of the developing conflict situation. This capability must encompass the rapid construction of plans that integrate the effective employment of strategic and theater nuclear forces with general purpose forces for achieving theater campaign objectives. (S)

Flexibility

US nuclear forces, supporting C³I, and plans for their use, must allow selectivity of employment to ensure appropriate responses to any level of aggression. Enhanced employment flexibility is a significant objective which will be pursued aggressively to increase current capabilities and take full advantage of emerging force and supporting C³I improvements while maintaining a responsive decision-making and force execution process. (S)

Survivability and Endurance

Nuclear forces and supporting C³I systems must be sufficiently survivable and enduring to support the targeting requirements of this directive, to provide for effective control and direction of forces in a protracted conflict, and to ensure the Secure Reserve Force is capable of being employed after an extended withhold period. (S)

The composition of the Secure Reserve Force shall be based heavily on the probability of survival and endurance of its components and supporting C³I, and upon its capability to attack a broad range of targets, including hard targets. The Secure Reserve Force shall be increased as rapidly as improvements to both forces and related C³I permit greater roles for it and increased flexibility in its employment. (S)

Non-Warsaw Pact Employment Objectives

Preplanned attack options shall be developed, as appropriate, to prevent potential adversaries outside the Warsaw Pact from coercing the United States and its Allies and friends in the aftermath of a Soviet nuclear attack and US counterattack. We should rely as much as possible upon theater nuclear and Secure Reserve Force weapons for this purpose. (TS)

Relationship of Acquisition Policy to Employment Policy

Our nuclear force and C³I acquisition programs must support the employment policy established by this directive. The criteria used in evaluating acquisition of nuclear forces must recognize that each element of our force posture possesses inherent attributes that are better for some conflict situations but are of lesser importance for others. Programs will be designed to achieve:

- Greater survivability, endurance and military effectiveness, both in the forces and associated C³I structure.
- A subset of forces and supporting C³I that have a high probability of enduring survival in a nuclear war.
- More effective capability for targeting Soviet military forces and associated C³I in the context of a rapidly changing conflict situation.
- The capacity to assess battle damage and the disposition of remaining forces and weapon systems. (S)

Greater emphasis will be placed on multiplicity of nuclear systems and basing modes to strengthen the overall warfighting capability of our nuclear forces. This multiplicity of nuclear systems and basing modes complicates Soviet defense and attack planning, strengthens mutual reinforcement among the nuclear and conventional force elements in our own attack planning and execution, and hedges against unforeseen degradation of individual elements of our nuclear forces. (S)

Related Defense Activities

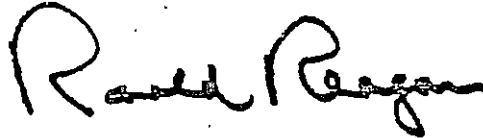
Active and passive defenses can contribute significantly to a credible deterrent. The damage-limiting capacity of an effective strategic defense reduces the likelihood of coercion and increased prospects for postwar recovery of the United States. Specific guidance for defensive measures will be provided in separate documents. (S)

Implementation

The policies described herein shall be implemented in accordance with a Master Plan developed by the Secretary of Defense. In addition to ensuring compatibility of acquisition and employment policies, it will provide for consistency with the revitalized Continuity of Government and Civil Defense programs. The plan should also outline provisions for conducting frequent exercises (including semi-annual participation by the National Command Authority) to evaluate employment doctrine and force and planning capabilities. The plan shall be completed and forwarded for the President's review by February 1, 1982. (S)

A report will be provided to the President at least annually on our employment plans, including, but not limited to, the size and capability of the Secure Reserve Force, the degree of employment flexibility available, and the status of improvement programs. (S)

PD-59 is superseded by this directive. (e)

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ronald Reagan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R".

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