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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

May 5, 1972

Memo For DR. TUCKER

Attached for your review is the latest draft of the NSRAP Review Panel Report. Dr. Foster is planning to send this version and the draft of the Tentative Guidance to Mr. Laird and ADM Moorer today.

Foster did not want to discuss in his forwarding memorandum the detailed procedures for implementing the SecDef guidance and for subsequent annual review of that guidance. The final paragraph of the forwarding memorandum has been changed to state that the guidance document could be ready for transmittal to the JCS by September, 1972, that the JCS could then begin a phased modification of SIOP and other plans, and that a method will be needed to resolve any ambiguities in the guidance or further issues which emerge during that modification.

*J. J. Martin*

J. J. Martin  
Director,

Strategic Retaliatory Division

Enclosure

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Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS  
Date: 15 AUG 2018 Authority: EO 13526 + 5 USC § 552  
Declassify: \_\_\_\_\_ Deny in Full: \_\_\_\_\_  
Declassify in Part: X  
Reason: 3.3(b)(5)(6)  
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May 4, 1978

Review of U. S. Policy for the  
Employment of Nuclear Weapons

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Review of U. S. Policy for the  
Employment of Nuclear Weapons

1. General

On January 19, 1972 the Secretary of Defense appointed a panel to initiate an annual review of the U.S. policy pertaining to the employment of nuclear weapons, to identify and illuminate national policy on other issues requiring resolution, and to prepare for his consideration proposed Guidance for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons. 1/

This panel consisted of the following individuals:

Dr. John S. Foster, Jr., Director of Defense  
Research and Engineering (Panel Chairman)

Dr. Albert C. Hall, Assistant Secretary of Defense  
(Intelligence)

Mr. G. Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense  
(International Security Affairs)

Dr. Gardiner L. Tucker, Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Systems Analysis)

LGen John W. Vogt, USAF, Director, Joint Staff 2/

VADM J. P. Weinell, USN, Director J-5 (Plans and  
Policy) 2/

In order to carry out the tasks assigned by the Secretary of Defense, the panel decided to scope the review as follows:

a. Because the employment of nuclear weapons at any level has the potential for escalation to strategic nuclear war and because

- 1/ SecDef memo dtd 19 Jan 1972, subj: Review of U.S. Policies for Employment of Strategic Nuclear Weapons (C), SecDef Control No. X-0277.  
2/ On April , 1972, VADM Weinell replaced LGen Vogt as the representative of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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theater nuclear weapons can provide options for flexible nuclear responses below the level of the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP), the policy for employment of theater nuclear weapons was included within the scope of the panel's review.

b. The panel considered employment policies which will be feasible with U. S. nuclear forces programmed for 1974.

In reviewing U. S. policy for employment of nuclear weapons, the panel examined:

- Analysis of the consequences of SIOP execution under various conditions.
- Issue papers prepared for the Review Panel by its staff.
- Views of SACEUR and CINCSAC as expressed in informal meetings with the Review Panel.
- Technical aspects of the war planning process as reported by several members of the Review Panel's staff on the basis of several visits to the Joint Strategic Targeting and Planning Staff at Omaha.
- Current U. S. policy pertaining to employment of nuclear weapons, including, but not limited to, the current National Strategic Targeting and Attack Policy (NSTAP) and its implementation in the SIOP.
- A revised NSTAP prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for consideration by the panel.

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The findings of the panel regarding these are summarized in section 2 through 5 of this report. Section 6 contains a review of issues identified by the panel and a summary of the approach to these issues taken in the proposed Guidance for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons.

2. Current Environment Conditioning the Employment of Nuclear Weapons

Many factors condition the ways in which nuclear weapons can be most effectively employed to achieve U. S. objectives,

and the Soviet and PRC doctrines for employment of nuclear weapons. Examination of these factors led to the following conclusions and uncertainties:

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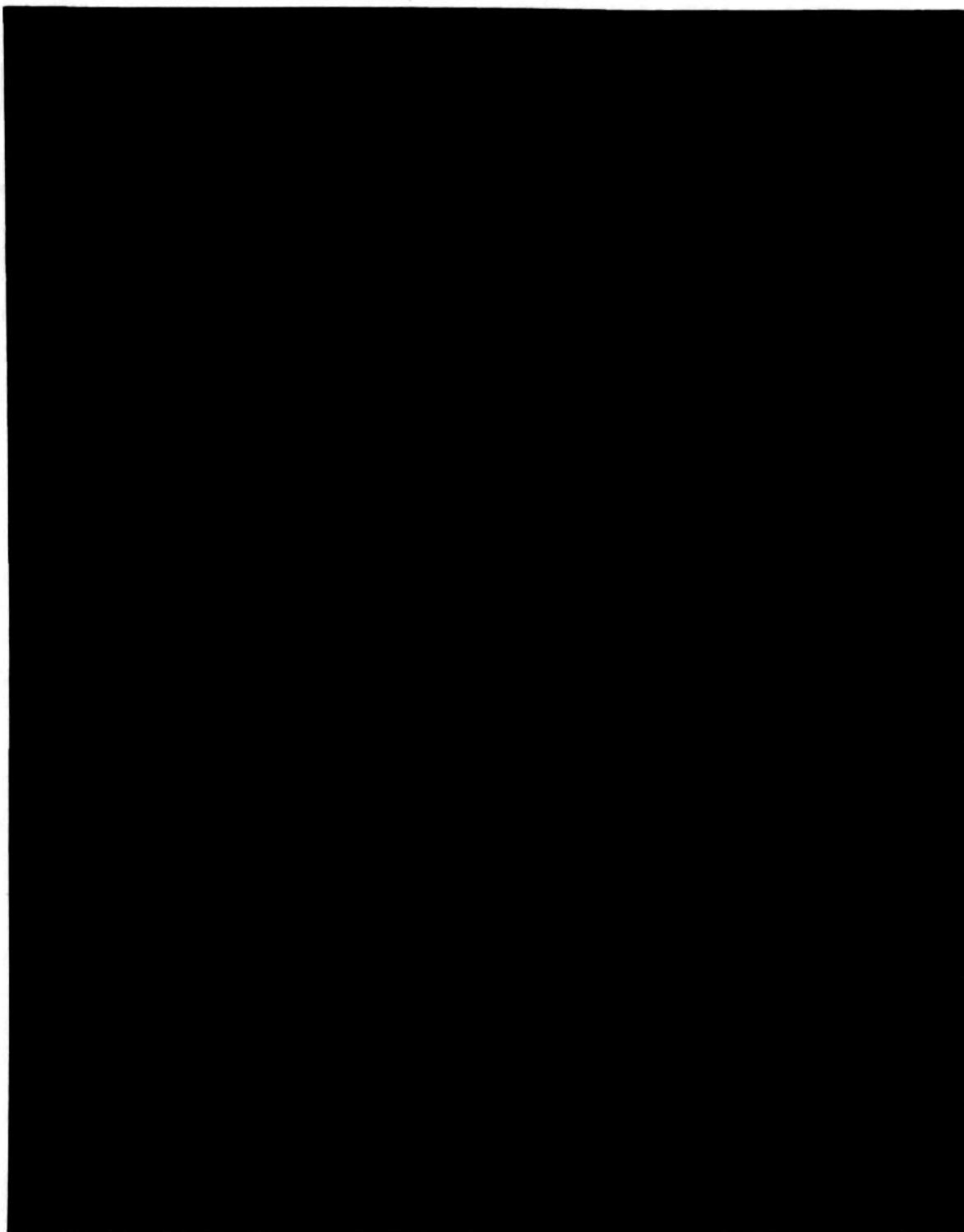
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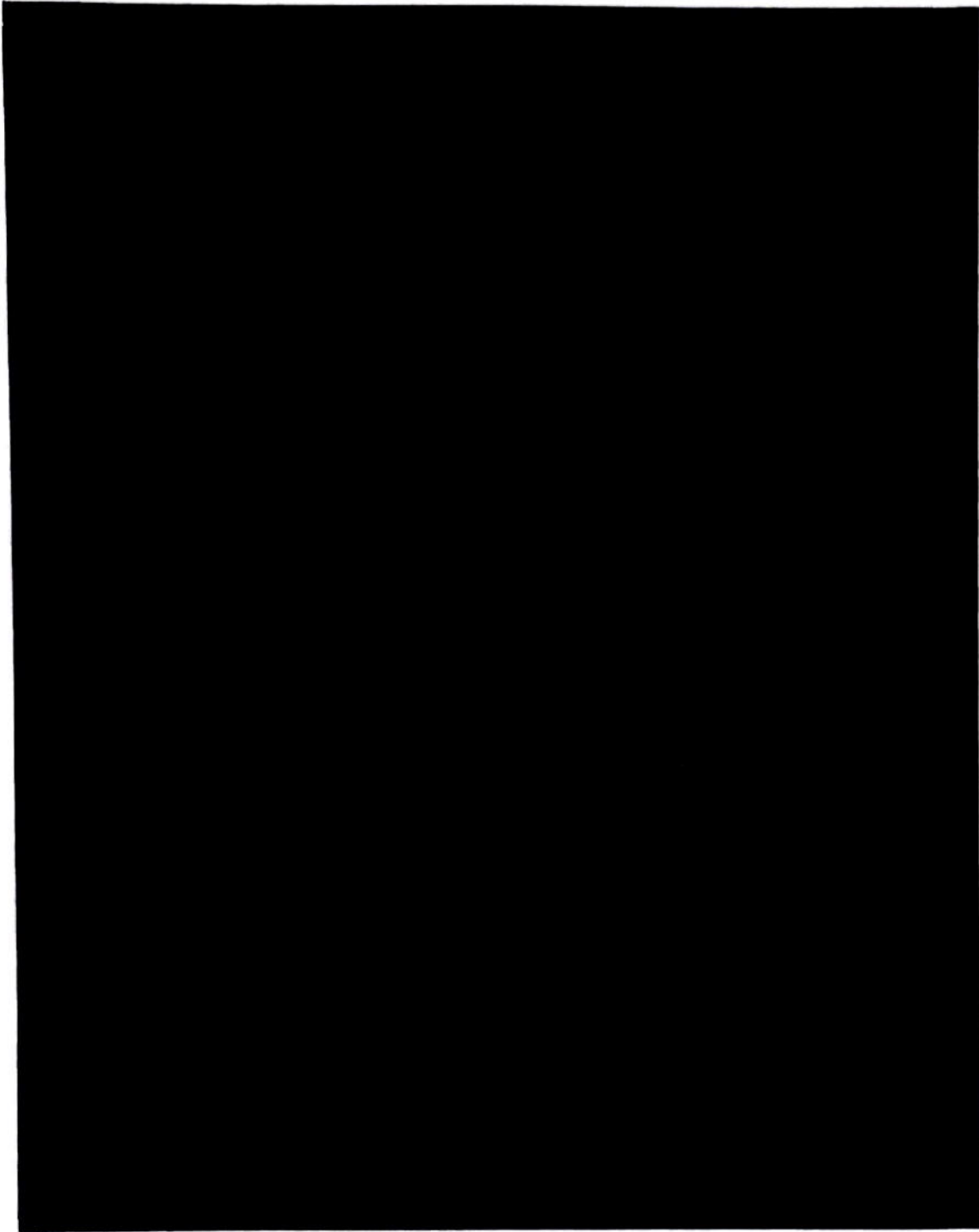
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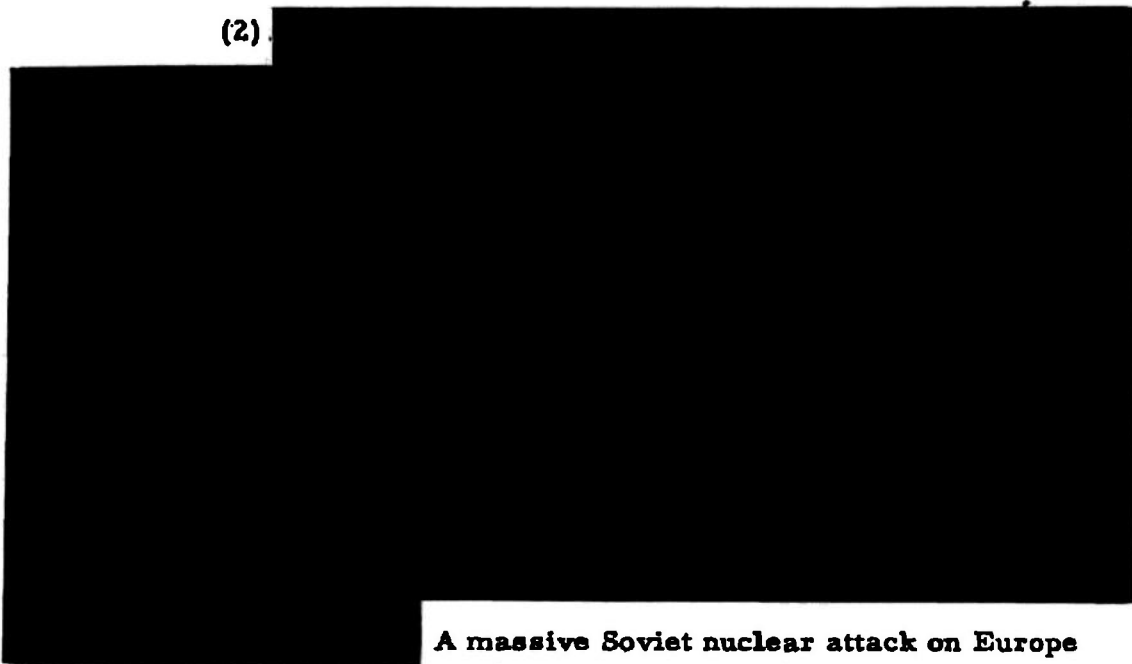
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c. Soviet and PRC Nuclear Warfare Doctrine

(1) We have, of course, major uncertainty as to the nuclear warfare doctrine of the Soviet Union and the PRC. However, the panel has considered available documentary evidence. Soviet writings and statements of their military and civilian leaders suggests that they may have a doctrine for launching retaliatory nuclear strikes upon receipt of tactical warning of a nuclear attack on the USSR. On the other hand, such a doctrine does not appear to be consistent with trends in the Soviet nuclear force posture toward increased pre-launch survivability which would enable those forces to ride out an attack.

(2)



A massive Soviet nuclear attack on Europe or CONUS could result in all-out nuclear retaliation by the United States; moreover, the prize for which they presumably initiated the

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aggression -- Western Europe -- is likely to be destroyed during such an all-out exchange.

(3) Less is known about the PRC nuclear doctrine than about Soviet nuclear doctrine, in part because of the comparatively recent emergence of a PRC nuclear weapon capability.

d. Conclusions

Although we do not know what deters the Soviet Union and PRC from initiating nuclear warfare, and differing judgments could be made by others on these matters, the following conclusions were arrived at by the Panel:

- The United States should continue to attempt to deter nuclear war by having a high confidence capability to threaten unambiguously the destruction of targets highly valued by the enemy
- If some nuclear conflict nevertheless occurs, the United States should attempt to control escalation (through selective employment of U. S. forces and coercion of the enemy to constrain his further use of nuclear weapons by continuing to threaten enemy targets) to the lowest level consistent with preserving vital U. S. interests.
- If nuclear conflict cannot be constrained, and large scale nuclear war ensues, then the United States should

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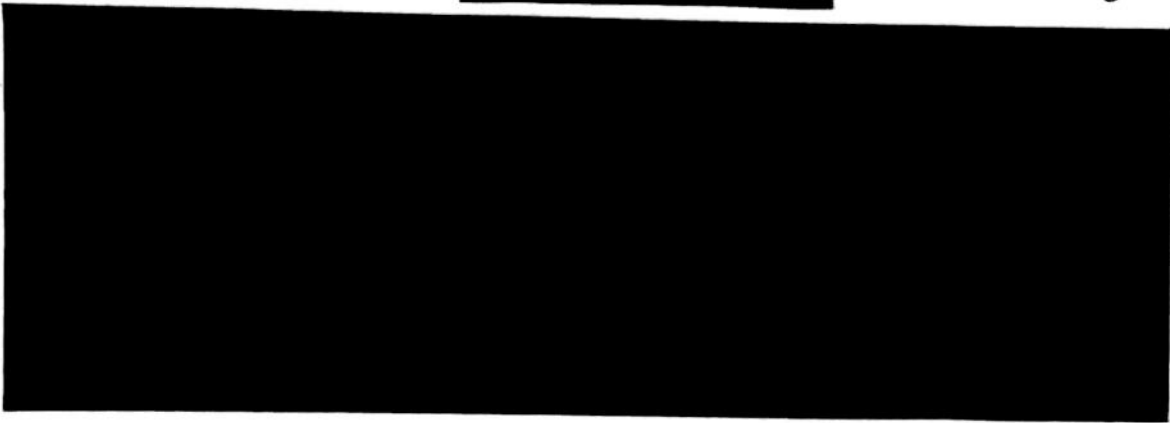
attempt to



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The Review Panel's considerations in arriving at these conclusions include the following:

(1) Based on Soviet statements about nuclear strategy, supported by the political, economic, and military trends observed in the Soviet Union, it appears that Soviet attacks and coercion would be deterred less by threatening  than by threatening



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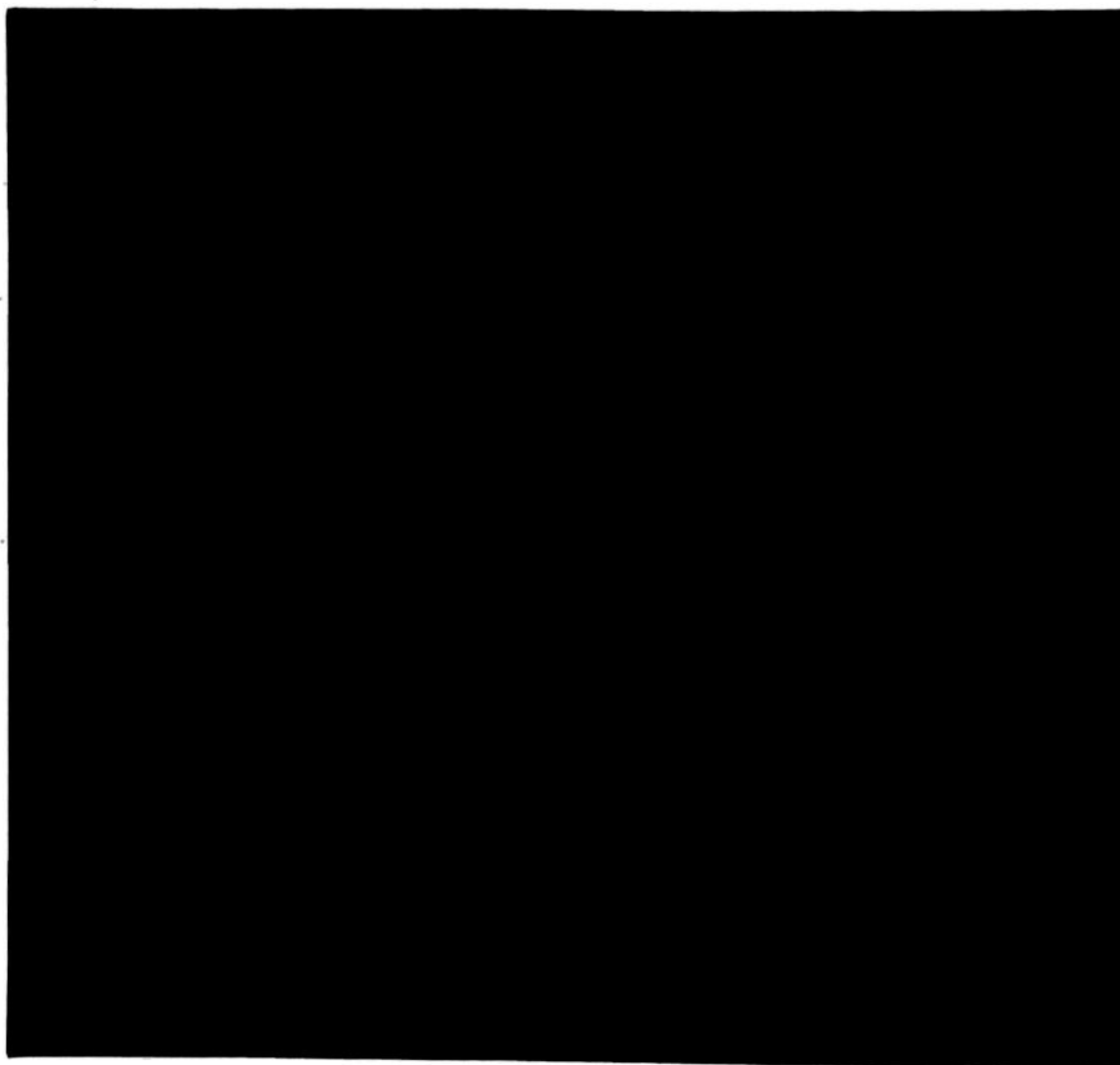
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(3) It appears that deterrence of PRC attacks and coercion can best be achieved by threatening



1/ The panel is in agreement on this priority but, because of the departure from past policy,<sup>7</sup> believes that this matter requires careful consideration by the SECDEF.

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3. Current National Policy for Employment of Nuclear Weapons

The Panel reviewed U.S. national policy documents, including National Security Decision Memoranda (NSDMs), the President's annual foreign policy reports, the Defense Policy and Planning Guidance, the Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP), and the NSTAP. NATO policy documents were also reviewed. As discussed in the next section, the NSTAP is the only source of definitive policy for the employment of nuclear weapons. Other policy documents either do not address nuclear weapon employment or they add little to the NSTAP guidance. The President's foreign policy reports and the Defense Policy and Planning Guidance do, however, stress in general terms the need for flexibility in nuclear weapon employment plans in order to have attack options appropriate to the nature and level of the provocation.

4. The Current NSTAP and Its Implementation in the SIOP

The NSTAP, prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, provides guidance to subordinate U.S. commanders in preparing the SIOP. Since this guidance was prepared from the viewpoint of the planner who must target nuclear weapons, it does not provide full and explicit coverage of all aspects of national policy for the employment of nuclear weapons. Moreover, the policy on which the current NSTAP was based was established in the early 1960s and does not adequately reflect present world conditions.

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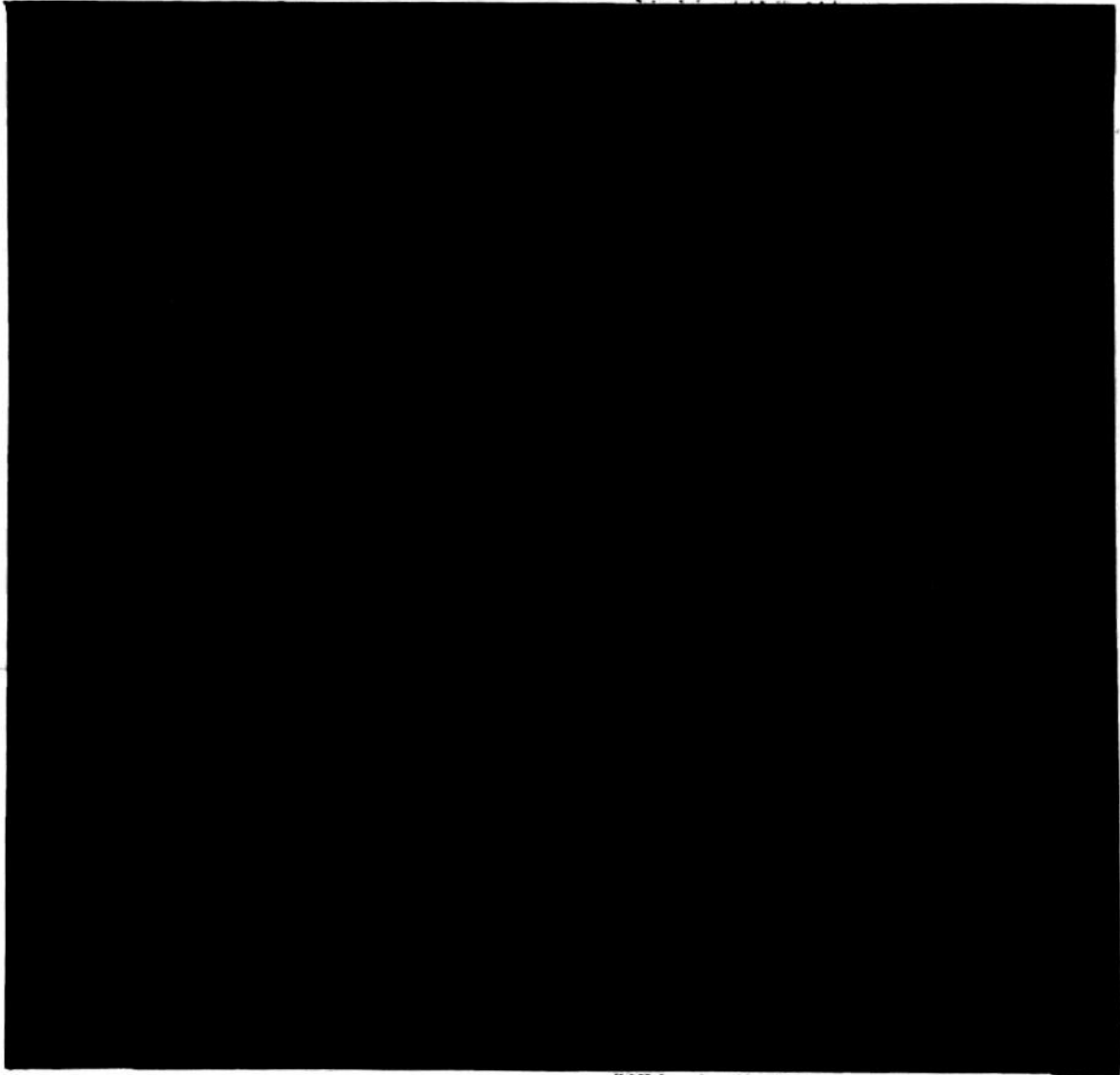
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The fundamental concept of the current NSTAP is to maximize U. S. power so as to attain and maintain a strategic superiority which will lead to an early termination of the war on terms favorable to the United States and its allies. Inherent in the concept is the integrated employment of forces to meet the objectives outlined below:



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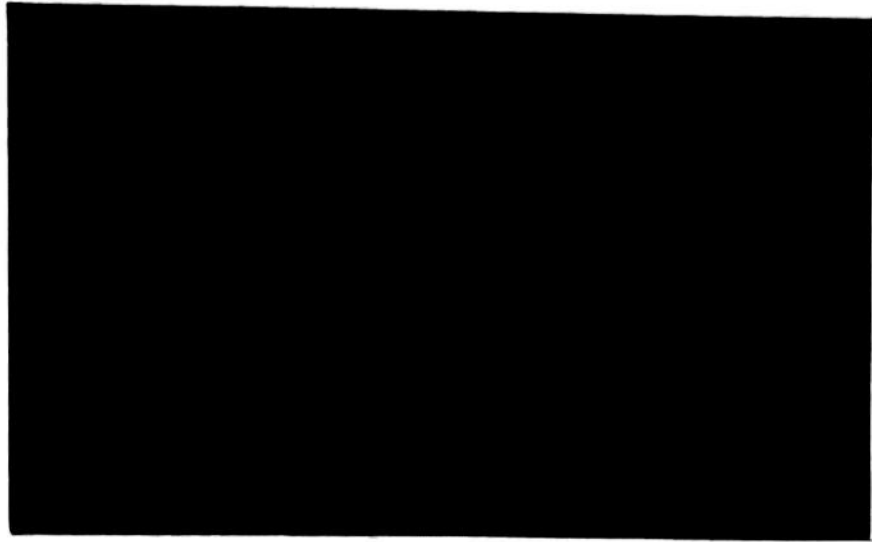
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The NSTAP organizes the SIOP tasks into attack options to provide some degree of flexibility to the National Command Authorities (NCA).



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The current NSTAP provides guidance for employment of SIOP-committed forces -- SAC forces, SLBMs, and some theater-based aircraft. Other documents, both U.S. and alliance documents, provide guidance for employing theater nuclear weapons outside of the SIOP.

In an effort to control escalation, the current NSTAP provides options which may be used to control escalation. However, the Panel concluded in the course of its review that nuclear weapon employment policy should emphasize explicitly control of escalation or termination of hostilities as a means of limiting damage to the United States and its allies.

5. JCS Revision of the NSTAP

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have approved a revision of the NSTAP for consideration by the panel.<sup>2/</sup> The revision has the same objectives as the current NSTAP, but there are several major changes:

a. The weight of effort against [REDACTED] is increased in an attempt to satisfy the third criterion of NSDM 16.<sup>3/</sup>

2/ Chairman, JCS memorandum to the Secretary of Defense (JCSM-66-72), dated 22 Feb 1972. This revision has not yet replaced the NSTAP described in Section 4.

3/ The third NSDM 16 criterion states that the United States "should maintain the capability to deny to the Soviet Union the ability to cause significantly more deaths and industrial damage in the United States in a nuclear war than they themselves would suffer."

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The revised NSTAP specifies

[REDACTED]

b. There is emphasis on the principle of greater flexibility to provide the NCA with attack options appropriate to the nature and level of the provocation,

[REDACTED]

However, the revised NSTAP provides general guidance that the SIOP will be structured for various levels of attack and to provide maximum flexibility consistent with military considerations.

c. There are provisions for Limited Strategic Options (LSOs) below the level of SIOP attacks. The weapons for LSOs could come from the forces committed to the SIOP.

d. There are provisions for a "swing force", which is a reserve force for the purposes of providing a capability to meet contingencies, increasing the weight of attack against SIOP targets and preventing nuclear coercion subsequent to SIOP termination.

e. [REDACTED]

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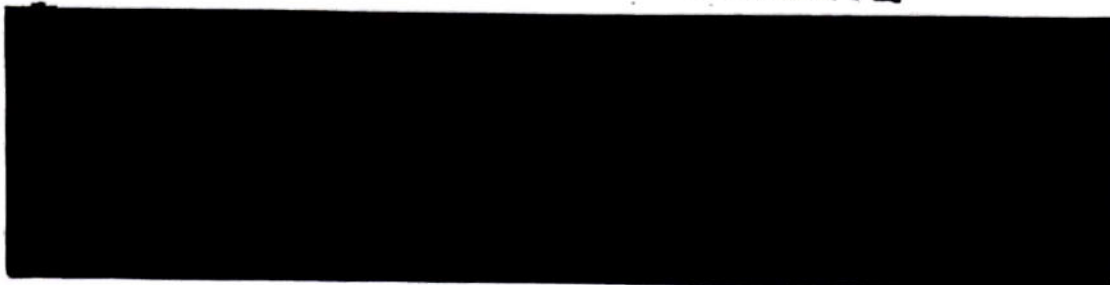
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6. The Need for Expanded Policy Guidance

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The Panel considers the revised NSTAP to be a major step forward in defining national nuclear targeting and attack policy. In the course of the review, there were identified additional issues of importance to the Panel which were not within the intended scope of the revised NSTAP. Furthermore, the Panel found that no other policy document covered these issues. Accordingly, the Panel prepared a new "Tentative Policy Guidance for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons." This new document incorporates most new features of the revised NSTAP and is consistent with the limited policy guidance for employment of nuclear weapons that exists elsewhere. This "Tentative Guidance" takes a different perspective than the NSTAP, broadens the scope of the policy guidance, and introduces some new strategic concepts.

In developing this guidance, a number of major issues were identified and studied. The following Section summarizes Panel resolution of these issues as they appear in the "Tentative Guidance."

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7. Issues Addressed in Formulating Nuclear Employment Policy

In addressing the problem of employment of nuclear weapons, numerous issues were identified and studied. The more important of these issues developed during the NSTAP review are outlined below in order to give some insight into the rationale behind the "Tentative Policy Guidance for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons", which is attached to this report. For each of these issues, the position taken in the "Tentative Guidance" is outlined, alternatives considered are reviewed and the rationale for the position that was taken is outlined:

a. Basic Objectives. What should be the strategy and basic objectives in conducting nuclear warfare?

Consistent with the conclusions in paragraph 2d, the "Tentative Guidance" takes the position that United States strategy is, first, to deter war and that this is best accomplished by emphasis on the threat of destruction of enemy

If deterrence has failed to the point that a moderate level of nuclear conflict occurs, the basic objectives of the "Tentative Guidance" become control of escalation of the intensity of the war and an inducement of an early end to the war at the lowest level consistent with preserving U.S. vital interests. The means

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of pursuing this objective is discussed in paragraph 7c. If warfare has reached a level where control of escalation becomes meaningless,

[REDACTED]

and limiting damage to ourselves and allies. Targeting priorities to pursue this objective are discussed in paragraph 7b.

The only alternative seriously considered was to rely exclusively on options to attack the enemy [REDACTED] for the purpose of limiting damage to the U.S. and its allies. Consistent with the findings in paragraph 2a, this approach was rejected because of its dubious effectiveness and strong potential for escalation under some circumstances. It was felt that a more effective potential means of limiting further damage to the U.S. while the conflict was still limited would be to implement a strategy which sought to control escalation and/or terminate hostilities.

b.

[REDACTED]

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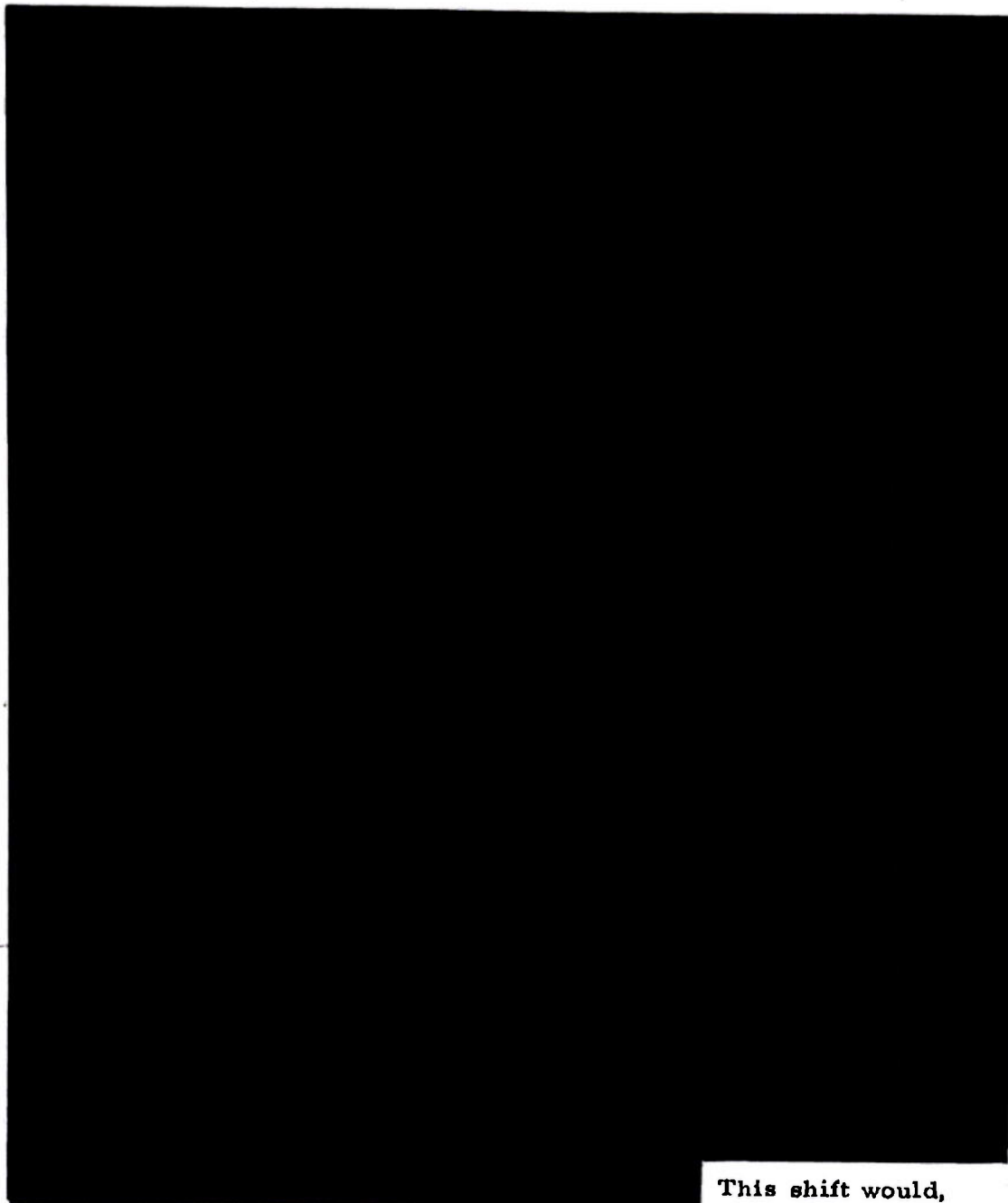
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This shift would,

in the judgment of the Panel, detract from the relative post-war

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position of the United States in the event of all-out nuclear war and this prospect, in turn, would also weaken the coercive effect of withheld attacks in efforts to control escalation.

(2)



More fundamentally, however, the Panel did not incorporate this criterion into the "Tentative Guidance" because:

(1) It is doubtful that this criterion can be fulfilled in targeting current and near term forces without abandoning most other major targeting objectives.

(2) The essential concept underlying this criterion --



has been more adequately reflected in the "Tentative Guidance," as discussed in paragraph 7a.

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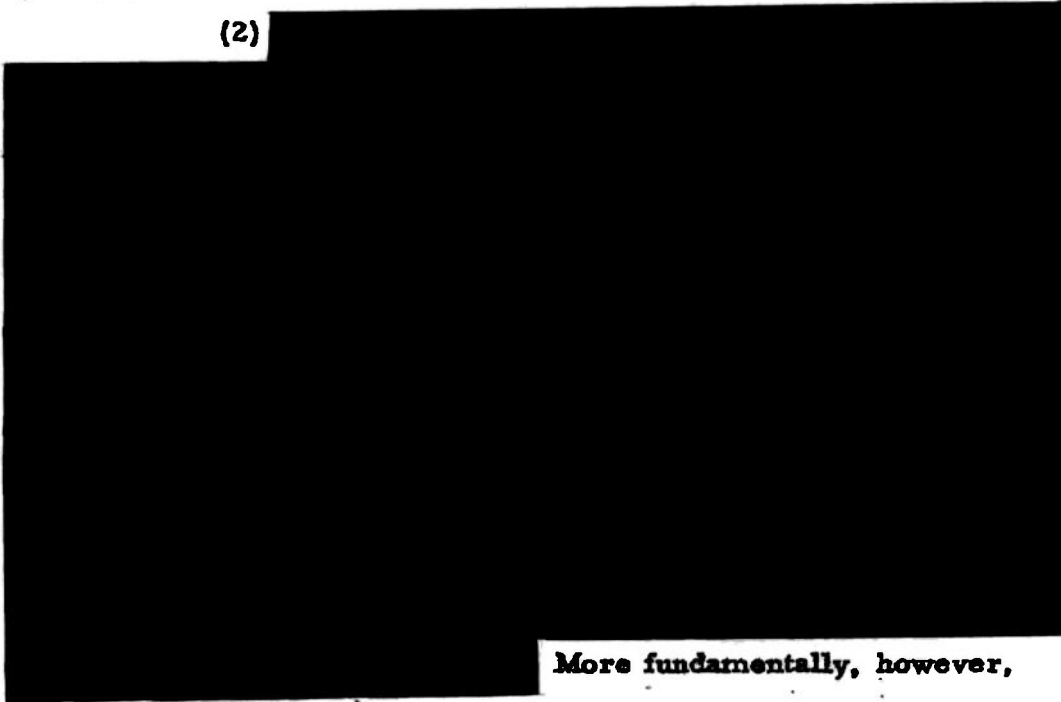
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c. Control of Escalation. To what extent should nuclear weapon employment plans provide options intended for the control of escalation?

As stated above, the "Tentative Guidance" makes a major departure from previous targeting and attack policy by introducing the concept of controlling the escalation of nuclear conflict as a means of limiting damage to the United States and its allies. This concept is implemented in the "Tentative Guidance" by specifying Major Attack Options, Selected Attack Options, and Limited Nuclear Options which are intended to provide the National Command Authorities with the ability to conduct nuclear war within clearly defined boundaries (escalation boundaries) for the purpose of signalling to the enemy U. S. willingness to keep the war limited. Some options for attacking



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The structure of the attack options in the "Tentative Guidance" is discussed in paragraph 7d. In the present paragraph we address the broader issues associated with the strategic concept of escalation control. Specifically,

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- Is there any real prospect that escalation can be controlled once a nuclear war has started?
- Is it realistic to preplan specific attack options for use in limited nuclear war, considering the many uncertainties concerning the circumstances in which a nuclear war might occur?
- Would provision of attack options for use in limited nuclear war significantly reduce the effectiveness of the Major Attack Options in securing a relatively favorable post-attack position for the United States and its allies?

(1) Can Escalation Be Controlled? The ability of the

United States to control the escalation of a nuclear war will depend strongly on the size and scope of the enemy attack (assuming they strike first), on the ability of the enemy leadership to discern US willingness to limit the conflict, and on the enemy responses to US attacks.

These factors are, of course, unpredictable in advance of a conflict and may not be clear to the National Command Authorities at the time of a conflict. As noted in paragraph 2c, Soviet doctrine, military exercises, and nuclear force posture suggests that they may have made inadequate plans and may have unsuitable forces with which to engage

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in limited nuclear war. On the other hand, there are circumstances where it would be in the Soviet's best interest to keep the conflict limited. This, together with the Soviet's past propensity to avoid unnecessary risks in crisis situations, suggests that the Soviet Union may well elect to keep a nuclear conflict limited.

In view of these uncertainties, the Panel concluded that, if a nuclear conflict started on a limited scale, a promising means of reducing damage to the United States and its allies while protecting U.S. vital interests would be to seek to control escalation and induce an early termination to the war. Accordingly, attack options for this purpose were provided in the "Tentative Guidance."

(2) Can Attack Options Be Preplanned for Control of Escalation? There are many uncertainties about the circumstances of a nuclear war which indicate that attack options designed for controlling escalation may need to be tailored at the time they are considered by the National Command Authorities for execution. These uncertainties include the nature of any tacit or explicit understandings about rules of engagement which may emerge between the United States and [REDACTED] as the crisis builds up, the nature of the specific issues of the conflict, the specific U.S. political and military objectives

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in the conflict, and new information about [REDACTED] and the effectiveness of U.S. [REDACTED] weapon system which may become apparent during the conflict.

Without prior preparation, it could take days or weeks to plan, evaluate, and implement attack options, depending on the size of the attack, whereas the National Command Authorities may need such options in a matter of minutes or hours. Accordingly, the Panel concluded that nuclear war plans and procedures should provide as many preplanned attack options as possible, consistent with the capabilities of current and near term U.S. forces and command and control and with the need for Major Attack Options designed to secure a relatively favorable post-war position for the United States and its allies in the event that escalation cannot be controlled. These preplanned attack options should be designed to suit likely limited war scenarios and should provide adaptable building blocks which can be combined or modified with comparative ease to fit the actual circumstances in which they might be used.

(3) Would Provision of Many Attack Options Significantly Degrade US Military Capabilities for All-Out Nuclear War? Options for limited nuclear strikes which involve incremental execution of forces can reduce the effectiveness of US nuclear forces for securing

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a relatively favorable post-war position for the United States and its allies to the extent that:

- vehicles carrying several warheads (bombers and MIRVed missiles) cannot be allocated optimally if each vehicle is constrained to attack either too few or too widely dispersed targets;
- attacks must be conducted piecemeal and the forces cannot take advantage of a coordinated, large attack to penetrate defenses;
- withheld forces and their command and control face destruction by enemy follow-on attacks;
- procedures for incremental execution of forces are more complicated than those for executing Major Attack Options, leading to delay and confusion.

For these reasons, the Panel felt it was important to specify attack options in some detail. To the extent that the Panel was able to examine the technical issues of force application, it concluded that the attack options specified in the "Tentative Guidance" represent a reasonable balance between efforts to control escalation and military requirements if these efforts are not successful. It was recognized,

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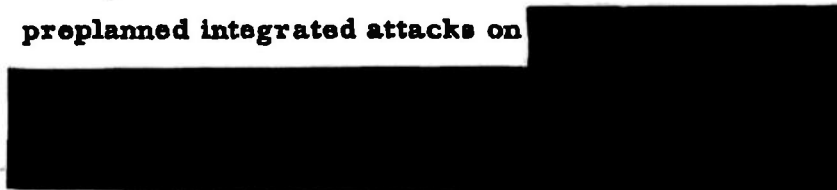
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however, that an iterative process, probably with modification, addition, or deletion of specific attack options, will be needed before there can be assurance that the best balance has in fact been achieved.

d. Attack Options. Should the guidance specify in detail the attack options for embodiment in war plans? If so, to what degree can and should these options be broken down into specific target classes to provide selective release of forces against classes? Should the guidance call for limited options to provide for limited employment of nuclear weapons? If so, how specific should the guidance be regarding weapons, targets and planning procedures?

The "Tentative Guidance" identifies three classes of attack options:

i) Major Attack Options which provide for large scale preplanned integrated attacks on



ii) Selected Attack Options which provide for preplanned attacks on limited regions and/or limited classes of targets.

iii) Limited Nuclear Options which provide for attacks

which are of very limited scale or which are constructed in response to particular circumstances not provided for in the Selected Attack Options.

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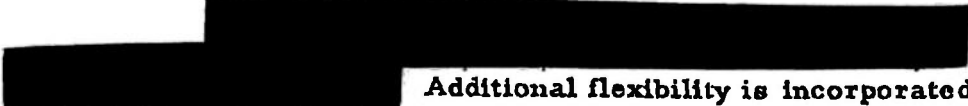
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JS Appeal 3.3(b)(5XG) + OSD Appeal 3.3(b)(5XG)

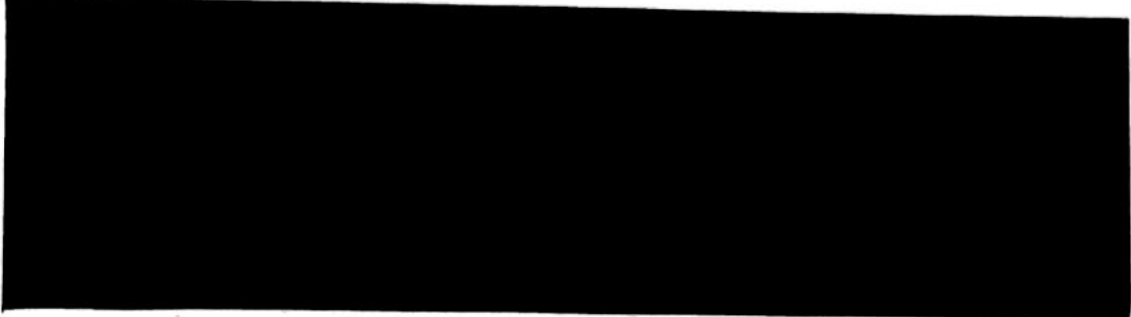
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 Additional flexibility is incorporated by provision for execution of these options singly or in combination in any order and by the provision for selective withholds which modify the options. These options are structured to observe escalation boundaries and to provide the means for deterring enemy escalation beyond such boundaries by holding back more severe threats. It is believed that the definition of escalation boundaries and withheld threats is of such importance that general classes of targets in each option should be a matter of policy.

It should be noted, however, that excessive proliferation of preplanned attack options and inappropriate choices for attack options in the guidance could result in a policy which could not be implemented. Therefore, an attempt was made to obtain a reasonable balance between the need to specify options in detail and the concern for maintaining military efficiency in force employment.



JS Appeal 3.3(b)(5) + OSD Appeal 3.3(b)(5)

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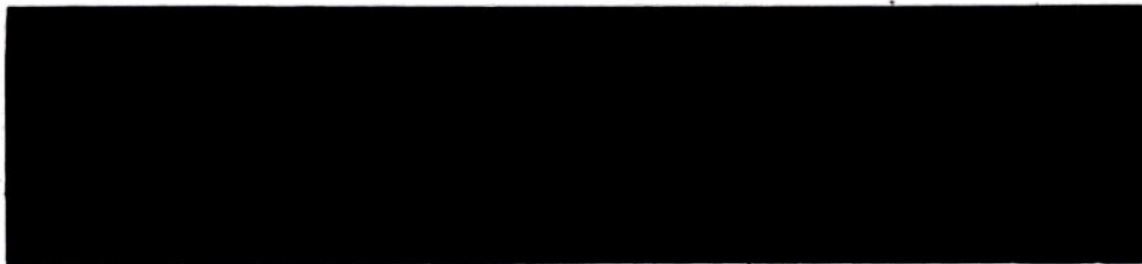
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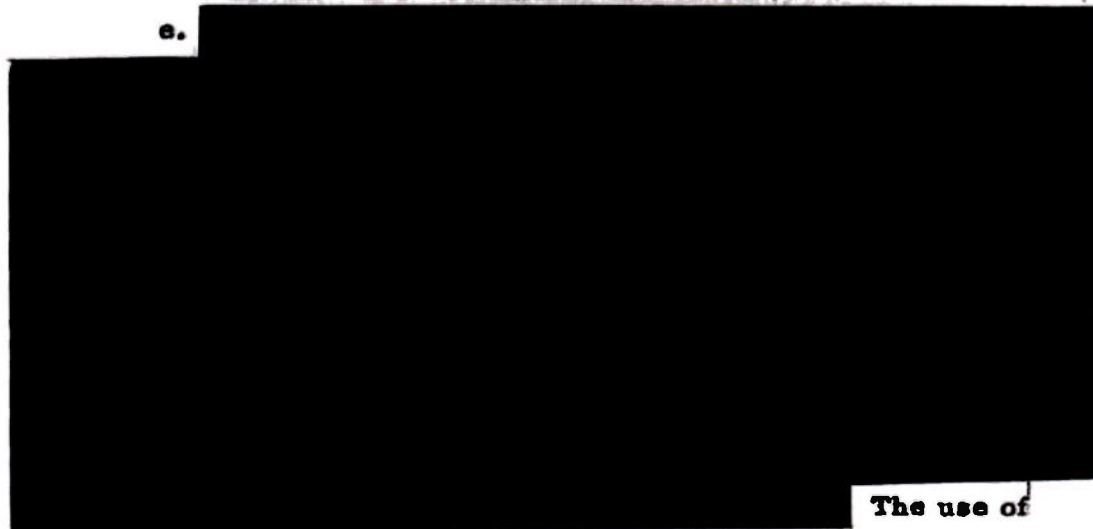
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targets. The guidance established guidelines for the planning process to support construction of LNOs and specifies that the process be exercised on a regular basis.

Greater detail in specifying the LNOs would greatly increase the complexity of nuclear employment planning while providing no greater flexibility in implementing the LNOs. The approach taken in the "Tentative Guidance" allows the NCA a large amount of flexibility in the selection of limited attacks while utilizing the benefits of preplanning.

c.



The use of

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JS Appeal 3.3(6X5)(6); OSD Appeal 3.3(6X5)(6)

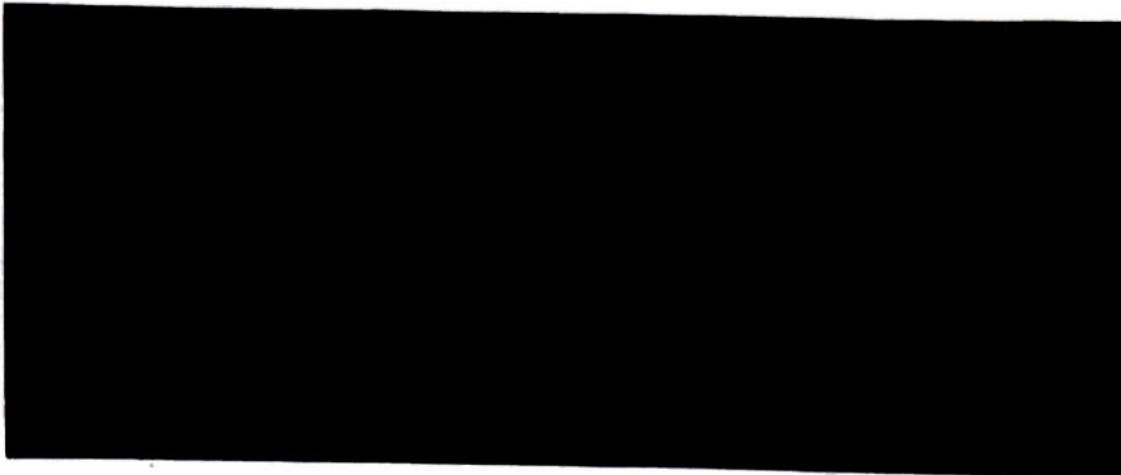


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some SIOP committed forces to such a task are permitted since it is doubtful this can be accomplished with theater nuclear weapons alone.



f. The Role of Strategic Forces in Theater Conflicts.

Should the employment guidance address both the SIOP committed forces and the theater nuclear forces? If so, what support from SIOP forces is appropriate in theater nuclear conflicts? How does this differ between NATO and the Pacific?

The "Tentative Guidance" applies equally to strategic and theater nuclear forces. By specifying objectives and guidelines for employment, but by not specifying the forces to be used in each case, the "Tentative Guidance" does provide, intentionally, for use of SIOP committed forces in theater nuclear conflicts.

The general intent

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of the guidance is to display no difference in the role of SIOP committed forces relative to theater nuclear forces in Europe and in Asia. However, options which support European theater conflicts are different from those supporting Asian theater conflicts because [REDACTED] and because of the NATO coordination requirements.

JS Appeal 3.3(b)(5X6) + OSD Appeal 3.3(b)(5X6)

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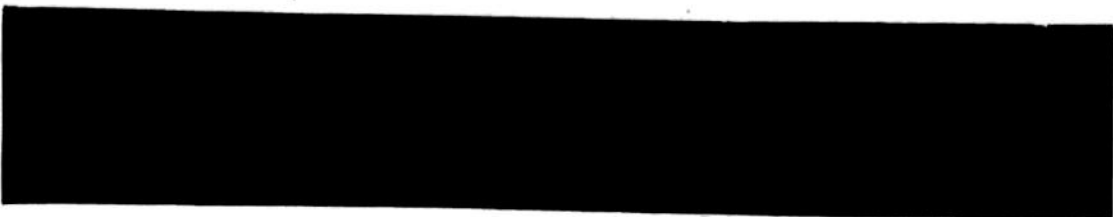
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JS Appeal 3-3(b)(5)(X)(6) + OSD Appeal 3-3(b)(5)(X)(6)

g. Reserve Force. To what extent would we maintain a reserve or swing force, i. e., one in addition to withheld forces? How large and retargetable should this force be and what targets, if any, should be assigned to it on a pre-planned basis?

The "Tentative Guidance" specifies a swing force in the reserve in addition to forces withheld from execution and that portion of our strategic forces which can be generated to alert status or re-constituted from previous missions. The purpose of the swing force is twofold: First, to provide, in addition to any forces which may be withheld, a reserve with high enduring survivability to prevent post-attack nuclear coercion and a reserve to increase the effectiveness of attacks by use of strike assessment information. Second, to provide a capability for use in Limited Nuclear Options and a capability to augment Selected Attack Options, if, in attempting to control escalation, additional weight of effort on a Selected Attack Option is desired at the time of execution.

The size and composition of the swing force to meet the objectives set forth for it remains to be determined.

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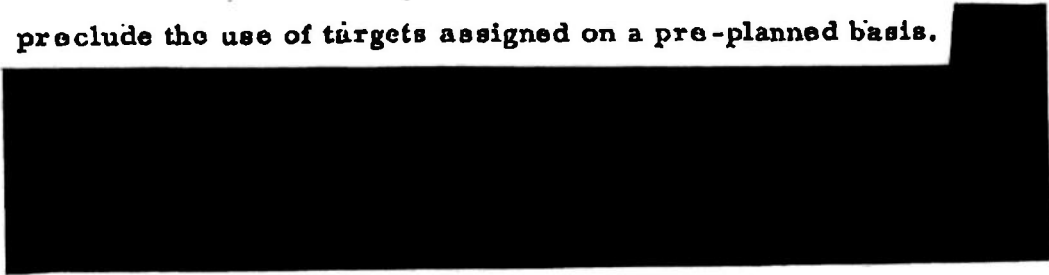
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The swing force should be retargetable because of the requirements that may be placed on it by the NCA. This does not preclude the use of targets assigned on a pre-planned basis.



The alternative of not having a swing force either precludes the implementation of any ad hoc requirements on targeting or requires that ad hoc needs be taken from the pre-planned assignments which tend to reduce the efficiency of the SIOP in subsequent tasks. No consideration was given to foregoing implementation, by some technique, of ad hoc requirements which may be generated by the NCA.

JS Appeal 3.3(b)(5)(G) + OSD 3.3(b)(5)(G)

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