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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301



SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

9 June 1971

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: MAY 22 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Strategic Flexible Response

I am concerned that the lead time involved in acquiring new equipment and systems to provide a strategic flexible response capability will not result in any improvement in our ability to respond with strategic nuclear weapons at less than SIOP level until 1975-1976. In view of the short lead time involved in making planning and procedural changes as compared to hardware and system changes, I believe we should take immediate steps to take advantage of whatever flexibility is inherent in our strategic forces and command and control structure as they exist today. This may provide a degree of flexibility which is acceptable in the interim and may give us an earlier capability than is otherwise available.

The attached memorandum for your signature requests that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff submit a plan to provide an Interim Flexible Response capability and provides the necessary guidance for the development of such a plan.

Gardiner L. Tucker

Gardiner L. Tucker
Assistant Secretary of Defense

Attachment

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	TOP SECRET CONTROL
Copy No.	R-4 RPDD
Case No.	96-F-1596
TS No.	97-TS-107
Document No.	2

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SUBJECT: Strategic Flexible Response

I have read with interest your memorandum of April 2, 1971 which summarized the results of the Joint Staff review of U.S. command and control systems. We are in basic agreement as to the limitations of our current strategic command and control posture as well as some of the actions which could be taken immediately to help overcome these limitations. In addition, there is an urgent need to move toward a strategic command and control posture which will provide a wider range of flexible response options than is currently available and which does not involve full utilization of SIOP forces.

I am concerned, however, that the lead time involved in acquiring new equipment and systems will not result in any improvement in our ability to respond with strategic nuclear weapons at less than SIOP level until 1975-1976. In view of the short lead time involved in making planning and procedural changes, I believe we should take immediate steps to take advantage of whatever flexibility is inherent in our strategic forces and command and control structure as they exist today. While planning and procedural changes in themselves may not be enough to provide the degree of flexibility ultimately desired, the degree of flexibility which they can provide may be acceptable in the interim and may give us an earlier capability than is otherwise available.

It is requested that the Joint Staff prepare and submit a plan by 1 September 1971 for my approval that would identify changes in existing planning staffs, procedures, and equipment, if needed, to provide an interim flexible response capability.

The enclosure is forwarded to stimulate thinking on the problem and incorporates planning assumptions that may be of help to your staff. This additional material is not intended to restrict Joint Staff approaches to the problem or to dictate the nature of your response.

Enclosure

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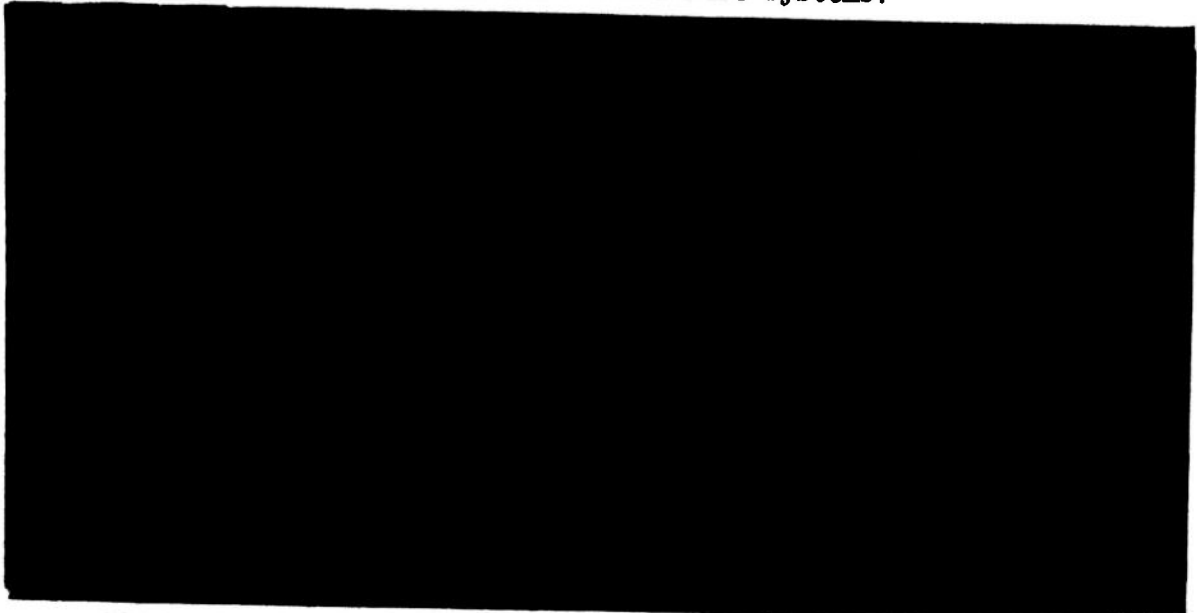
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Objectives and Critical Assumptions
for the Plan to Provide an Interim
Flexible Response Capability

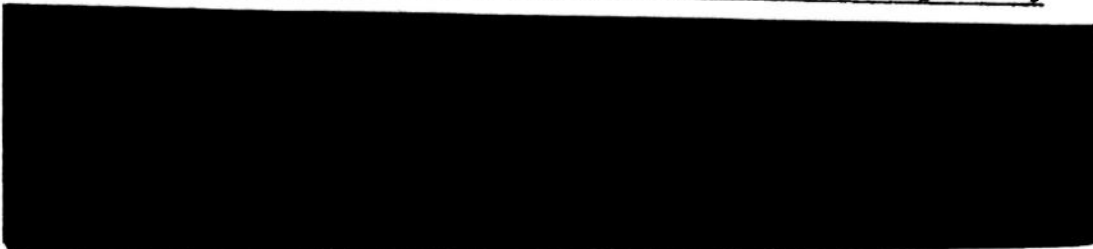
Objectives of the Flexible Response Plan

To provide a wider range of strategic nuclear strike options of the following types within the limitations of current strategic weapons, command and control and surveillance systems:



These attacks should demonstrate U.S. resolve to escalate a crisis to whatever level of nuclear warfare is necessary to protect our interests, while at the same time showing U.S. restraint and determination to resort to large retaliatory strikes only when the enemy leaves us no other choice.

Critical Assumptions for the Interim Flexible Response Capability



(3) Since the employment of strategic weapons in flexible response is intended to serve primarily political purposes, guidelines for force employment will be provided by the President and certain senior Presidential advisors. It is important that the U.S. nuclear

JS 3.3(6)(5)
OSD 3.3(6)(5)

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force attack be responsive to the Presidential guidelines and that the nuclear strike plan be thoroughly reviewed by the President's advisors and their staffs before submitting it to the President for implementation.

[REDACTED]

To meet such a short response time, limited strategic strike planning should be performed by a full-time staff based on periodic guidance from the President and/or his designated advisors.

Approach to Nuclear Strike Planning

One approach to planning the nuclear strike (within Presidential guidelines) would be to establish an interdepartmental ad hoc nuclear response planning group (supported by a technical staff which would plan the details of the response) which would establish the objective of each ad hoc nuclear response and review the detailed strike plan to assure:

- (1) U.S. objectives and intent are clearly demonstrated in the design and execution of the attack.
- (2) The enemy is left with viable alternatives to de-escalate and will be forced by the nature of his response to reveal his objectives.
- (3) The risks of escalation and enemy miscalculation are acceptable.

[REDACTED]

The supporting technical staff could consist of elements from the JSTPS relocated to the Washington area, and would:

- (1) Plan the details of the strike, including which targets to strike, the weapons to be used, and the timing of the strikes.
- (2) Upon receipt of proper authorization from the NCA, prepare and disseminate emergency action messages and communications to effect the strike and its necessary support.
- (3) Provide estimates of (a) probability of successful attack, (b) ways in which the attack might fail, and (c) estimates of undesirable effects such as collateral fatalities, fall-out casualties, etc.
- (4) Estimate the degradation in the residual force capability which would result from the strike.

JS 3.3(b)(5)
OSD 3.3(b)(5)

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This approach to nuclear strike planning has the advantage that:

(1) It would be responsive to the political and military situation existing at the time.

(2) It is easy to implement and comparatively inexpensive.

(3) It could provide valuable operational experience on which to judge the adequacy and feasibility of our plans and systems intended to provide a greater degree of flexibility beyond 1975 (for example, the Advanced Airborne Command Post).

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WIIS
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Declassify: _____ Deny in Full: _____
Declassify in Part: X
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