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OASD(SA)SP-SRD  
July 7, 1972

US POLICY FOR EMPLOYMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

In January, 1972, a DoD panel, chaired by Dr. Foster, was established to review US nuclear weapon employment policy. In May, 1972, this panel forwarded to the Secretary of Defense the initial results of this review, including a draft of "Tentative Policy Guidance for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons". The major features of this Tentative Policy Guidance are summarized below and compared with the current policy; issues and actions for consideration by the Secretary of Defense are then highlighted. A more detailed discussion is contained in the panel's report, "Review of US Policy for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons."

It should be noted that the panel addressed the employment of current and near-term US nuclear forces, not the design and posture of these forces.

I. Current Employment Policy

The Panel reviewed US and NATO documents and found that the National Strategic Targeting and Attack Policy (NSTAP), prepared by the JCS, is the only source of definitive policy for the employment of US nuclear weapons. The currently effective NSTAP and a revision prepared by the JCS for consideration by the Foster Panel are summarized in this section.

A. Current NSTAP

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 a nuclear war on terms favorable to the United States and its allies. To implement this concept, the NSTAP calls for employment of forces in the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) to meet the following objectives:

1. To destroy or neutralize, on a selective basis, nuclear offensive capabilities of the enemy that threaten the United States and its allies, in order to limit damage to the United States and its allies to the maximum extent practicable.
2. To destroy or neutralize, on a selective basis, a comprehensive enemy military target system in order to assist in the destruction of the enemy's overall military capability.
3. To destroy, on a selective basis and under all conditions of war initiation, the war-supporting and urban/industrial resources of the enemy.

Paralleling these objectives, there are three SIOP tasks, or weapon-target packages, designated ALPHA, BRAVO, and CHARLIE.

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1. Task ALPHA includes strikes on nuclear threats, including ICBM and IR/MRBM sites, bomber bases, bases for missile-launching submarines, civilian and military command and control, nuclear weapon storage sites, and defense suppression targets.

2. Task BRAVO includes strikes on tactical airfields and other general purpose and nuclear military targets critical to the overall conduct and direction of military operations.

3. Task CHARLIE includes strikes on urban/industrial targets and military targets co-located with cities.

The NSTAP organizes the SIOP tasks into attack options to provide some degree of flexibility to the National Command Authorities (NCA); these are summarized in Figure 1. All of the attack options of the current NSTAP include execution of Task ALPHA (nuclear threat targets). These attack options provide for withholding Tasks BRAVO and/or CHARLIE and for selective withholding, by task and by country, of attacks against the PRC and the Far Eastern and East European allies of the USSR and the PRC. Moreover, attacks on the government centers in Moscow and Peiping may be selectively withheld or executed.

Within the current SIOP per se, China cannot be attacked without attacking the Soviet Union, although there are contingency plans outside of the SIOP which provide for strategic nuclear attacks against China without attack or overflight of the Soviet Union.

B. Revised NSTAP The JCS prepared a revision of the NSTAP for consideration by the Foster Panel. It has the same objectives as the current NSTAP, but there are several major changes:

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2. Greater flexibility is called for to provide the NCA with attack options appropriate to the nature and level of the provocation, but the explicit definition of Tasks ALPHA, BRAVO, and CHARLIE is dropped. The revised NSTAP provides general guidance that the SIOP will be structured for various levels of attack and should provide maximum flexibility consistent with military considerations, but does not define specific attack options.

\* 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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3. There are provisions for Limited Strategic Options (LSOs) below the level of SIOP attacks, but specific LSOs are not defined.

4. 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.

5. It provides for SIOP attacks on the PRC without concurrent attack on or overflight of the Soviet Union

## II. The Tentative Policy Guidance

The current NSTAP is intended to provide guidance to subordinate US commanders in preparing the SIOP and 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 is based was established in the early 1960's and does not adequately reflect present conditions.

The Foster Panel considered the revised NSTAP to be a major step forward, but identified additional issues of importance which were not within the intended scope of the revised NSTAP and which were not addressed by other policy documents. Accordingly, the Panel prepared a new document entitled "Tentative Policy Guidance for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons," which incorporates most of the new features of the revised NSTAP and is consistent with the limited employment policy guidance that exists elsewhere (e.g., in the President's Foreign Policy Reports). This "Tentative Guidance" takes a different perspective than the NSTAP, broadens the scope of the policy guidance, and introduces some new strategic concepts. Its major features are discussed below; Figure 2-is a parallel summary of the current NSTAP, the revised NSTAP, and the Tentative Guidance.

A. Perspectives of the Secretary of Defense. The Panel, in drafting the Tentative Guidance, sought to incorporate the perspectives of the Secretary of Defense -- and only those perspectives -- in a manner analogous to the Defense Policy and Planning Guidance.

B. Expanded Scope. The Tentative Guidance establishes a National Nuclear Targeting and Attack Policy (NNTAP) which covers plans for employing both strategic and theater nuclear weapons. Although some theater weapons are targeted in the SIOP, the current and revised NSTAPs are not intended to provide guidance for all theater nuclear employment plans. It should be noted, however, that much of the detail in the Tentative Guidance in fact applies to employment plans for strategic nuclear weapons and that further work is needed on policy guidance for theater nuclear employment plans.

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C. Control of Escalation. The Foster Panel concluded that, in an all-out nuclear war with the Soviet Union, counterforce strikes cannot provide high confidence in significantly reducing the urban damage the United States and its allies would suffer. Accordingly, the Tentative Guidance gives first priority to limiting the level and extent of nuclear conflict (control of escalation) and to early termination of the conflict on terms acceptable to the United States. This is a major departure from the policy of the current and revised NSTAPs; nonetheless, the panel is in agreement on this priority.

Damage to the United States and its allies could be limited if both sides in a nuclear war show restraint by not attacking many targets valuable to the other side. In an effort to control escalation, initial US attacks could be limited in their size, in their military objectives, and in the regions and types of targets attacked. To deter the enemy from further escalation and to induce him to negotiate an end to the war, further US attacks could be held in reserve to threaten targets highly valued by the enemy leadership. The following new strategic concepts to this end are introduced in the Tentative Guidance and reflected in its attack options:

1. Escalation Boundaries -- attack options should allow the NCA to conduct nuclear war within clearly defined boundaries (e.g., attack size, target classes, and geographic regions) for the purpose of demonstrating the intention to keep the war limited.

2. Deterrence of Further Enemy Escalation -- to complement escalation boundaries, there should be attack options which, when withheld, can credibly threaten targets highly valued by the enemy leadership for the purpose of deterring escalation across those boundaries.

3. Trans-Attack Stability -- the US forces and C<sup>3</sup> necessary for successful execution of those attack options which are likely to be withheld to deter further escalation should have a high degree of enduring survival throughout a protracted, but limited, nuclear conflict in order to minimize pressures on the NCA for early execution of those attack options.

4. Avoidance of Enemy Command and Control -- the NCA should have the ability to withhold attacks on the enemy NCA and their sensors and communications in order to preserve the enemy ability to control forces and to negotiate.

D. Objectives if Escalation Cannot Be Controlled. If escalation cannot be controlled, the Tentative Guidance takes the position that the United States should then give priority to securing a relatively advantageous political, economic, and military position in the post-war world. This concept is consistent with the objectives of the current and revised NSTAPs, but it is given greater specificity in the Tentative Guidance, which calls for destruction of:

-- the political structure which controls the enemy government;

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-- the industrial, technological, and other economic resources critical to rapid enemy post-war recovery;

-- and the residual general purpose and nuclear military forces which could otherwise continue to threaten the United States and its allies.

E. Attack Priorities in Preemption and Retaliation. The Tentative Guidance specifies the following priorities for weapon allocation in US preemptive and retaliatory attacks\*, in recognition that the status of US and enemy forces will be different in each case. The current NSTAP gives first priority to U/I targets and second priority to nuclear threat targets in both preemption and retaliation. The revised NSTAP does not assign weapon allocation priorities.

Planning Assumptions for US Forces

<u>Priority</u>	<u>Day-to-day alert, with pre-launch damage (retaliation)</u>	<u>Generated alert, no pre-launch damage (preemption)</u>
1	urban, industrial, political, economic targets	urban, industrial, political, economic targets
2	C <sup>3</sup>	nuclear forces, including hard ballistic missile launchers
3	residual general purpose and nuclear forces (less hard ballistic missile launchers)	C <sup>3</sup>
4	hard ballistic missile launchers	general purpose forces

The purpose of assigning the above priorities is not to specify the order in which targets would actually be attacked, but rather to provide guidance in assigning weapons to attack options so that the pre-planned weapon-target combinations are most likely to meet the objectives of the NCA at the time they are being considered for use.

F. Attack Options. There are many uncertainties about the circumstances of a nuclear war which indicate that attacks options may need to be tailored at the time they are considered by the NCA for execution. Without prior preparation, however, it could take days or weeks to plan, evaluate, and implement attack options, depending on the size of the attack. Yet, the

\*The Tentative Guidance avoids using the terms "preemption" and "retaliation" so as not to prejudice the circumstances in which the United States might actually use nuclear weapons.

NCA may need these 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 US force capabilities and C<sup>3</sup> and with the need for large attacks designed to secure a relatively favorable post-war position for the United States and its allies in the event that escalation cannot be controlled.

Limited attack options which involve incremental execution of US nuclear forces can reduce the effectiveness of these forces for securing a relatively favorable post-war position for the United States and its allies. This reduction in effectiveness can occur, for example, if forces must be allocated inefficiently to carry out limited attacks, massed forces cannot be used to saturate defenses, withheld forces and their C<sup>3</sup> face destruction by enemy attacks, and procedures for executing limited attacks lead to delay and confusion.

For these reasons, the panel concluded that attack options should be specified in some detail. Accordingly, the Tentative Guidance contains more attack options than the current and revised NSTAPs.

To the extent that the panel was able to examine the technical issues of force application, it concluded that the attack options represent a reasonable balance between efforts to control escalation and US requirements if these efforts are not successful. It was recognized, however, that an iterative process, probably with modification, addition, or deletion of specific options, will be needed before there can be assurance that the best balance has in fact been achieved.

The Tentative Guidance specifies that there should be three classes of attack options. Targets for Major Attack Options and Selected Attack Options are listed in Appendix A. Figure 3 illustrates the concepts underlying the attack options in the Tentative Guidance.

1. Major Attack Options provide for large scale, preplanned attacks on the USSR, the PRC, and their allies for the purpose of securing a relatively advantageous post-war position for the United States and its allies. These are analogous to the attack options of the current NSTAP.

2. Selected Attack Options provide for moderate scale, preplanned attacks on selected regions and/or classes of targets for the purpose primarily of controlling escalation as discussed in paragraph II.C above. The principle of flexibility which is implemented in these Selected Attack Options is contained in the revised NSTAP.

3. Limited Nuclear Options (LNOs)\* provide for small scale, ad hoc and preplanned attacks in circumstances not covered by the Selected Attack Options.

\*The term "Limited Strategic Options" (LSOs) is used in the revised NSTAP. The Foster Panel considered that theater nuclear as well as strategic forces could provide small attack options and introduced the term "Limited Nuclear Options" in the Tentative Guidance.

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Additional flexibility is incorporated in the Tentative Guidance by provisions for executing the Selected Attack Options singly or in combination in any order and by provisions for the following withholds, at the discretion of the NCA:

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III. Issues for Consideration by the Secretary of Defense

The members of the Foster Panel are agreed on the general approach to nuclear weapon employment planning contained in the Tentative Guidance. There was not, of course, agreement on all the details; areas of disagreement are footnoted in the May 2 version of the Tentative Guidance. Decisions by the Secretary of Defense on these disagreements are not needed now. Provided he concurs with the general approach, the Foster Panel may be able to eliminate some disagreements and can prepare issue statements on those remaining. Before additional work can proceed, however, it is important to get the Secretary's views on the general approach. To this end, he should particularly consider the following major innovations in the Tentative Guidance:

1. The priority accorded to control of escalation and the new strategic concepts for effecting such control.
2. The substantial amount of detail in specifying particular Major Attack Options and Selected Attack Options.
3. The greater emphasis placed on targeting political, industrial, economic, and general purpose military targets to maximize Soviet and PRC post-attack recovery time, in contrast to the heavy emphasis on targeting Soviet nuclear threats in the current NSTAP.

In addition, US declaratory policy to NATO about employment plans should be carefully considered. If the approach of the Tentative Guidance is implemented and is made known to NATO, the governments of these allies may become even more concerned that Europe could become the battleground for a limited nuclear war between the United States and the USSR. On the other hand, it is the view of the panel that, in the event of a nuclear war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, control of escalation and early war termination offer more promising means of limiting damage to Western Europe than do large counterforce strikes.

IV. Additional Analysis

A need for the following additional analysis emerged during the deliberations of the Foster Panel:

1. Develop more detailed policy guidance for theater nuclear employment plans. The panel has so far not gotten very deeply into this area.

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2. Investigate optimum targeting to minimize Soviet and PRC post-war power and maximize their post-attack recovery time. It is, for example, important to understand the extent to which discriminating targeting can reduce the number of warheads needed for these tasks.

3. Determine in greater detail ways to increase the enduring survivability of forces and C<sup>3</sup> during a protracted, but limited, conflict.

4. Identify in greater detail any problems which may be associated with implementing the escalation control concepts of the Tentative Guidance and ways to resolve these problems.

Completion of this additional work could, in some cases, take as much as 6-12 months. As an initial step, the Foster Panel should be tasked to develop more detailed work statements for these analyses, to add to the list of further analyses as necessary, and to recommend agencies for their accomplishment.

#### V. Recommended Actions by the Secretary of Defense

There is little question that the Tentative Guidance makes necessary and long over-due changes in the policy for nuclear weapon employment. But the detailed implementation of these changes in the SIOP and other nuclear employment plans will be such a major departure from past practices that it probably should not be made in one step. The staff analyses conducted to date may not have uncovered all the potential problems associated with implementing the Tentative Guidance. On the other hand, we may be able to move to even more attack options than specified in the Tentative Guidance. It is also important to ensure that the military commanders and their staffs completely and fully understand the concepts of the Tentative Guidance.

Therefore, we need to develop, offline, approximate employment plans which implement the guidance, using programmed FY 74 forces, and evaluate the results. Then, the Secretary of Defense should have another careful review in DOD and in the NSC before making the Tentative Guidance official.

The following schedule is proposed.

1. July 10-20. The Secretary of Defense should:

a. Obtain Admiral Moorer's personal views on the approach of the Tentative Guidance (he has been provided copies of the Tentative Guidance and the Panel's report).

b. Discuss the Tentative Guidance with the Foster Panel (a briefing covering the Tentative Guidance has been prepared).

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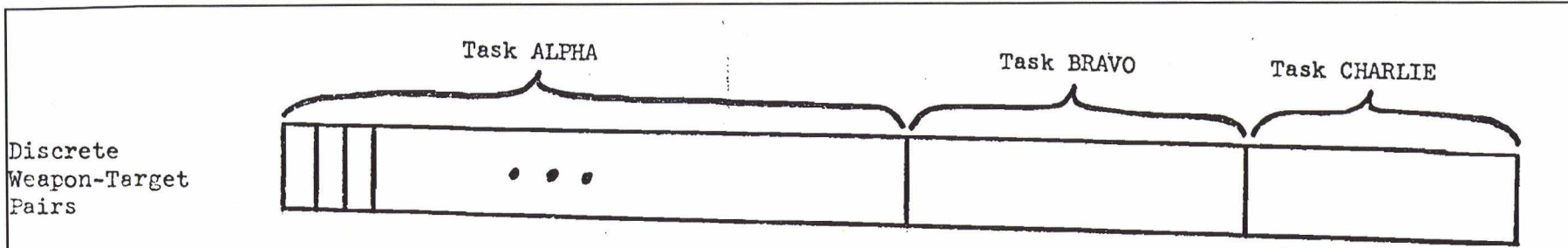
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- c. Discuss the Tentative Guidance privately with Dr. Kissinger.
  - d. Provided the Secretary concurs with the general approach, endorse the general approach and formally transmit the Tentative Guidance to the JCS for comment.
  - e. Provide copies of the Tentative Guidance to selected DPRC principals for comment.
2. July 20-August 31. The Foster Panel should accomplish the preliminary work needed to initiate the analysis of paragraph IV and should reduce or eliminate the footnoted points of disagreement in the Tentative Guidance.
  3. September and October. OSD and the JCS should prepare approximate (illustrative) employment plans for strategic and theater nuclear weapons which implement the Tentative Guidance with FY 74 forces. The Foster Panel should resolve any ambiguities or uncertainties in the guidance, as they arise.
  4. November. The Foster Panel should evaluate the capability of these illustrative plans to achieve the objectives of the Tentative Guidance and, if necessary, recommend changes to the guidance.
  5. December. The Secretary of Defense should review with the NSC the proposed guidance and the resulting nuclear weapon employment capabilities, then officially issue the guidance as policy.

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Attack Options

(X=execute; other tasks are reserved for possible later use)

<u>Task</u>	<u>U.S. Preemption</u>			<u>U.S. Retaliation</u>	
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2 Extended</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
ALFA (nuclear threat targets)	X	X	X	X	X
BRAVO (other military targets)		X	X	X	X
CHARLIE (urban/industrial targets)			X		X

FIGURE 1

Attack Options in the Current NSTAP

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FIGURE 2

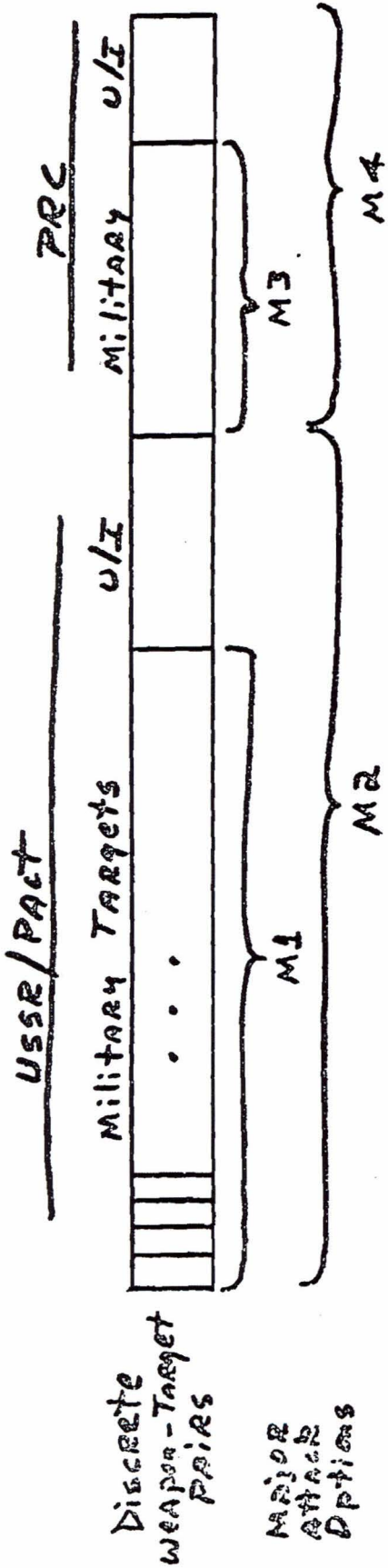
Comparison of Current NSTAP, Revised NSTAP,  
and Tentative Guidance

	<u>Current NSTAP</u>	<u>Revised NSTAP</u>	<u>Tentative Guidance</u>
Perspective	Nuclear weapons targeting	National policy guidance	National policy guidance
Scope	SIOP	SIOP	<u>All theater and strategic nuclear employment plans</u>
Control of escalation	Not addressed	Not addressed	<u>First priority if deterrence fails</u>
Objectives if escalation cannot be controlled	Terminate hostilities on terms relatively advantageous to US by destroying enemy military forces and war-supporting U/I resources	Terminate hostilities on terms relatively advantageous to US by destroying enemy military forces and war-supporting U/I resources	Secure relatively advantageous post-war position by attacks which <u>destroy enemy political control, maximize enemy post-war recovery time, and destroy residual enemy military forces</u>
Weapon allocation priorities	Priority given to U/I targets, then nuclear threat targets	Priorities not assigned	Priorities assigned in more detail than in current NSTAP; <u>priorities vary</u> between US preemption and retaliation
Attack options	Five attack options specified	No attack options specified. Provisions made for LSOs and for other flexible attack options.	Four major attack options and <u>12 selected attack options</u> are specified. <u>Provisions made for LNOs</u>

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	<u>Current NSTAP</u>	<u>Revised NSTAP</u>	<u>Tentative Guidance</u>
Swing Force	Not Included	Included	<u>Included</u>
Targeting and Damage Criteria	Gives detailed damage criteria by target class and expected damage objectives	Includes criteria of current NSTAP and increases weight of effort against U/I targets	Drops detailed damage criteria by target class; adds criterion of <u>trans-attack stability</u> , calls for one warhead on each Soviet ICBM and IR/MREB launcher in preemption, and increases weight of effort on U/I targets.

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LANDA  
(Execution of  
discrete  
weapon-target  
pairs)

Figure 3  
Attack Options in the  
Tentative Guidance

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Appendix A

Below are shown the target classes and regions which are targeted in the Major Attack Options and Selected Attack Options of the Foster Panel's "Tentative Policy Guidance for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons." Some targets are included in more than one Major Attack Option or Selected Attack Option.

Major Attack Options

M1. General purpose and nuclear military forces of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies.

M2. The military targets of attack option M1 plus the urban, industrial, political, and economic resources of the Soviet Union.

M3. General purpose and nuclear military forces of the PRC and its allies.

M4. The military targets of attack option M3 plus the urban, industrial, political, and economic resources of the PRC.

Selected Attack Options

S1<sup>3</sup>. Soviet nuclear threats to the United States (including national-level C<sup>3</sup>).

S2<sup>3</sup>. Nuclear missile threats to NATO Europe (including national-level C<sup>3</sup>).

S3. Nuclear bomber threats to NATO Europe.

S4. Conventional ground force threats to NATO Europe.

S5. Soviet and other Warsaw Pact missile-launching submarine bases.

S6. Comprehensive Warsaw Pact military target system; weapons employed in attack option S6 will not include those launched from CONUS.

S7. Soviet nuclear threats to US forces and allies in Asia.

S8. Soviet conventional military threats to US forces and allies in Asia.

S9. Suppression of Soviet air defenses for the purpose of demonstrating the vulnerability of these defenses and making the threat to Soviet cities more obvious.

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- S10. PRC nuclear threats (less national-level C<sup>3</sup>).
- S11. PRC national-level C<sup>3</sup>.
- S12. PRC conventional military forces.

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