

THE ROLE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

WORKING GROUP ON MILITARY ISSUES

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PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- State of Nuclear Enterprise, Policy/Strategy in America Today
 - Top Level Focus and Interest
 - Deterrent Forces and People
 - Infrastructure & Stockpile Concerns
 - Nuclear Policy and Strategy
- Implications of “State” for National Security
 - Four Concerns for the Future
- Answering the Questions – What Role for Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century?

State of “Things Nuclear” in America Today

- **Top Level Focus and Interest**
 - In second decade of erosion – “nuclear” has become a “marginal” issue for national security
 - Overriding focus on Iraq, War on Terror
 - Minimal responses to reports of decline by Senior Officials
 - DSB, JAC, Commission Reports since 1995
 - Washington’s growing nuclear “Allergy” (Murdock)
 - **Minot/Taiwan Incidents placed issue squarely back on DoD’s “Radar Scope”**
 - **CSAF & SECAF Resignations – Schlesinger Panels Reviewing AF and DoD Nuclear Enterprises**
 - **DSB Review of Minot Incident’s “Root Causes”**
 - **Atrophy of focus/interest at Senior Leadership Levels**

State of “Things Nuclear” in America Today (Continued)

- Deterrent Forces and People
 - Some Good News: SLBM/ICBM Forces
 - Bad News: Lack of focus/support eroding capability
 - Impacts on People – Career choices, growing expertise gaps
 - Nuclear Program and Modernization advocacy
 - **Post-Minot and Taiwan Incidents**
 - **Major SECDEF focus to re-energize US Nuclear Mission**
 - **Air Force Nuclear Roadmap Initiative, STRATCOM Organizational Moves, expecting more**
- Infrastructure and Stockpile
 - Congress: Give us coherent Nuclear Policy for 21st Century.
 - Infrastructure/Weapons Advocacy
 - Nuclear Community must clearly/forcefully answer question: “Does U.S. need nuclear weapons for future security?”

State of “Things Nuclear” in America Today (Continued)

- Nuclear Policy/Strategy – Appears to be on Life Support
 - Policy Establishment: only marginal interest in Nuclear Roles and Capabilities
 - Lack of attention has helped erode political consensus – which made nuclear deterrence a bi-partisan enterprise for decades
 - Key manifestations of this erosion of consensus
 - Inability to gain consensus on path forward (Stockpile, forces)
 - Erosion of U.S. deterrent as underpinning of other elements of national power, e.g., conventional, diplomatic, etc.,...future?
 - Abolition movement gaining momentum
 - Senior Leader Statements – Less than Helpful
 - Do Nuclear Policy/Strategy Centers of Excellence exist Today?
 - OSD nuclear policy (SO/LIC?), Joint Staff, Services, STRATCOM?
 - Fresh Start Needed - next Administration’s NPR (2009), Congressional Commission – many crucial issues/choices

Implications for National Security

Four Concerns for the Future

- **First Concern: what rationale has guided U.S. de-emphasis of nuclear?**
 - Not willing to prepare against uncertainties of future threat views of Russia, China and the nuclear landscape of 2030?
 - Some believe U.S. doesn't need nuclear weapons anymore – real challenges lie elsewhere (e.g., GWOT)
 - Others say world has entered new era....nuclear deterrent a fading asset; U.S. can do strategic missions without them
 - Or need nuclear weapons, but only the bare minimum and they should be invisible policy-wise
 - A number say nuclear weapons are decreasingly legitimate as strategy, diplomacy and coercion tools for 21st Century world.
 - Others see nuclear weapons and deterrence policies as obstacles to non-proliferation
 - Some suggest road to zero - “If we build it they will come!”

Implications for National Security

Four Concerns for the Future

- **Second Concern – is failure to maintain high level of credibility of the US Nuclear Enterprise sending the wrong message?**
 - To Allies? Extended deterrence partners?
 - To future adversaries (Resurgent Russia) ?
 - To states considering building a nuclear arsenal?
 - To military men/women in Nuclear AF/Navy today?
 - To Congress?
 - To the American People?
- Key future question: **If U.S. nuclear leadership role continues to fade over next 20-50 years, how deeply will America's national security be impacted?**

Implications for National Security

Four Concerns for the Future

- **Third Concern – Have we evaluated future landscapes and attendant risks?**
 - **Many future risks will manifest in both peacetime (stability) and crises:**
 - Crises - Taiwan, Israel, Iran, North Korea
 - Huge potential for resource conflicts – petroleum, water, etc.
 - **Deepening uncertainty surrounding Russia's future role**
 - Spread/growth of Militant Radical Islam
 - **Russia/China/Iran...all modernizing nuclear forces today while US moves in opposite direction.**
 - Nuclear Proliferation/WMD Terrorism
 - **As we view future risks, important to do so from adversary's perspectives....how do we want them to view U.S. commitment to nuclear deterrence?**

Implications for National Security

Four Concerns for the Future

- **Third Concern (Cont'd) Risks - Impacts on Stability?**
 - Impacts of changing fabric of international stability landscape?
 - America's world leadership role reduced/challenged?
 - Weakened voice – economics, UN, crisis/situational influence?
 - Extended deterrence guarantees - come into question?
 - NPT and Arms Control Implications
 - Impacts on attitudes of world nuclear players
 - Russia – **Changing its “stripes” as international player (Georgia)?**
 - China – what is nature of current nuclear buildup?
 - Iran/North Korea...likely to heed future U.S. demands?
 - Militant Islamic Movement – Impetus for Nuclear Terrorism?
- **If US fails to maintain credible nuclear deterrent, do we risk a radical change to current stability calculus? If so, is that a rational and effective security approach?**

Implications for National Security

Four Concerns for the Future

- **Fourth Concern: Is US ready to accept a dangerously uncertain future?**
 - If we continue to allow current downward spiral in nuclear focus, forces, infrastructure...are we willing:
 - To wake up in 15 years as 2nd rate nuclear power in decline?
 - To accept risk and stability implications of this new status?
 - To accept conventional, non-kinetic force as primary security guarantees?
 - To believe it is a responsible security policy for future?
- **These four concerns (and others) fall squarely in the lap of our next administration**
 - Need a fresh start....need to articulate a nuclear policy/strategy that can create & sustain a bi-partisan Congressional consensus over the long-term

Proposed Path Forward

- Need to re-vitalize US Nuclear Deterrent – give mission senior level attention; halt ongoing erosion, recapitalize forces/infrastructure
- **Thorough analysis of future security landscape required**
 - Re-focus intelligence community toward nuclear threat
 - Look at future World....nuclear players & implications for U.S. – key issues: stability, risks
 - May be difficult to assess, but need considered judgments in face of dangerous uncertainties
- **Answer the tough questions**
 - Best interests of America to continue nuclear de-emphasis?
 - If not, then what decisions required for future U.S. deterrent?
 - Forces, infrastructure, people
- **Develop plan, build consensus from analyses...future focused**
 - Hedge against uncertain future....don't create a future we won't like!
- **Develop and communicate a clear deterrence strategy**
- **“Although the strategic landscape has dramatically shifted since the end of the Cold War, the concept of deterrence and the need to deter adversaries from attacking our vital interests is just as important in the 21st Century as it was in the last century.” (General Chilton, STRATCOM Commander)**

Answering the Questions

- **First Question:** What are missions, requirements and assurance/dissuasion/deterrence contributions of U.S. nuclear weapons in 21st Century?
- **Missions:** No lack of uncertain and dangerous times ahead - U.S. deterrent must continue to underpin our security and be “valued” as unique, necessary forces
 - Vital for continued stability, international leadership status
 - **Can not underpin US security if we decline while other nuclear powers modernize**
 - **Extended deterrence guarantee vital to non-proliferation**
- **Requirements:** First & foremost - maintain credibility of U.S. deterrent (safe, secure, reliable, expert people)
 - Underpin with Intelligence analyses of future security landscape
 - Restore high priority status/focus to “Things Nuclear”
 - Re-state deterrence doctrine and communicate it (8010)!
 - Make tough force re-capitalization/stockpile decisions

Answering the Questions (1st Question - Continued)

- **Assurance, Dissuasion, Deterrence Contributions:**
 - **ADD Framework...to remain effective, must integrate all elements of our national power – CWMD, C2, Infrastructure, defenses, Cyber**
- **Assurance** – Key to non-proliferation...remains important U.S. role
 - America's long-term nuclear capabilities are crucial to assurance
 - But if U.S. "assurance" (capability and will) continues to waver, what choices for Japan, other dependent states?
 - Negative impacts on world-wide stability, America's reputation
- **Dissuasion** – Iran example...middle eastern states rush to go nuclear?
 - Maintain barrier to entry to existing nuclear powers seeking parity or superiority
 - Discourage nuclear competition, impede potential "sprints to parity?"
- **Deterrence** – Will be relevant/crucial in an uncertain future world
 - As long as U.S. existence can be threatened
 - But we must go back to basics....pay attention to capability and will
 - Do the tough future security analyses...ask/answer tough questions
 - "Will" must be effectively communicated in deterrence doctrine
 - Key question: What would U.S. deterrence policy/strategy/posture look like without nuclear capability?

Answering the Questions (Continued)

- **Second Question:** Should nuclear policies of Russia, China and other nuclear armed states have significant bearing on U.S. Nuclear Strategy, Policy and Forces?
 - Yes, must be principal factors in our security policies
 - Question best answered by looking to future:
 - National interests of Russia & China will dictate their reliance, focus on nuclear forces – we must “view through their lenses.”
 - Russia’s fading demographics, recent belligerence and nuclear policy statements point to continued reliance on nuclear status
 - China’s future desire for world power status (economic & military)
 - Not a hard decision – we need to be in a position of strength when dealing with Russia, China or any other nuclear power in future.
 - Important national security goal must be future stability
 - How achieve stability if U.S. deterrent capabilities/will questionable?
 - How would U.S. retreat from capable nuclear forces impact evolution of Russian, Chinese, others’ nuclear capabilities?

Answering the Questions (Continued)

- Second Question...Policies of Russia, China, etc., impact on U.S?.....(continued):
 - If U.S. nuclear leadership, deterrent focus and infrastructure continue to atrophy, instability is result
 - Future arms control initiatives – possible to develop meaningful treaties from position of inferiority?
 - **How can we expect to negotiate effective arms control agreements with Russia, China and others when our deterrent capabilities and will are questionable?**

Answering the Questions (Continued)

- **Third Question:** How relevant are Cold-War era concepts of nuclear parity, mutual assured destruction (MAD), “second to none” nuclear status, and the nuclear umbrella to 21st Century U.S. National Security Strategy?
 - **Parity** – U.S. deterrent must be viewed by adversaries as capable & credible....numbers important in deterrence calculus
 - Impacts of having fewer #s than Russia or China (50%,25%?)
 - Other factors related to significantly smaller stockpile than today:
 - **Reduced ability to execute escalation options**
 - **Could force counter-value targeting**
 - **MAD** – Never was U.S. Policy.....we focused on use of smallest option to deter further escalation. Our deterrent, to be effective, must be seen as capable of responding to any level of attack. Would MAD concept deter irrational actors?

Answering the Questions (Continued)

- **Nuclear Umbrella:** Important Non-proliferation factor for states like S.Korea, Japan....concept imperiled with current U.S. “state.”
- **2nd-to-None Nuclear Status:**
 - Concept **most important** in areas of nuclear surety, reliability and command and control
 - **2nd-to-none status very important in other areas as well:**
 - Modern, credible and capable forces
 - Trained cadre of dedicated, professional **people**
 - **Credible** weapons, **responsive** Nuclear infrastructure
 - Potential adversaries view of U.S. **capability and will**
 - » Modern, credible and capable forces
 - » Credible, well-articulated nuclear deterrence doctrine

Answering the Questions (Continued)

- **Fourth Question:** To what extent can non-nuclear capabilities (conventional and non-kinetic) replace nuclear weapons in the U.S. military toolbox?
 - A prudent “**complement**” to effective nuclear forces....decision maker needs quick, long-range attack choices other than nuclear
 - CTM, Conventional ICBM are integral forces for future
 - Provide more choices for national decision makers
 - But never “replace” nuclear as ultimate guarantors of security
 - Can never convince nuclear-armed adversary/aggressor that your conventional capabilities can end conflict on your terms quicker and more effectively than his nuclear forces can.
 - Conventional forces, though capable of destroying some targets, do not show same U.S. will/commitment to deterrence.
 - **Threats of rapid, massive destruction of Nuclear Weapons “trump” non-nuclear capabilities in crisis and conflict**

Answering the Questions (Continued)

- **Fifth Question:** Under what conditions could the United States (as it did with chemical and biological weapons) renounce the use of nuclear weapons and destroy its nuclear arsenal?
- Can't envision this approach being supportive of U.S. national security....how maintain stability with latency (knowledge) issue?
 - Particularly with irrational new members of nuclear club - Iran, N. Korea
- How get to zero? How maintain & prevent reconstitution? Rogue state with handful of weapons becomes "superpower."
- Example of destruction of chem/bio weapons is "apples and oranges" argument...different environment - nuclear arsenal remained for stability.
- US must not accept the "if we build it, they will come" philosophy for nuclear disarmament. National and cultural interests of world's states and non-state actors not conducive to that logic.
- Nuclear weapons have been crucial factors in keeping world safe...and U.S. has led the way as responsible world leader and steward of nuclear era.
- U.S. has undertaken huge decreases in weapons #s, taken 1/3 of Nuclear TRIAD off alert, de-targeted alert forces, etc.

Key Roles for Future U.S. Nuclear Forces

Some Basic Principles

- Underpin today's international stability by making Great Powers warfare a potentially losing proposition through prospect of catastrophic escalation
- Deter WMD use or asymmetric escalation in war
- Limit damage to U.S./Allies through counterforce/war termination should failure of deterrence occur
- Aid in nonproliferation of WMD by extending deterrence to key Allies
- Dissuade nuclear competition by providing barriers to entry (parity) or hedges to arms races
- Enhance deterrence by developing and effectively communicating clear U.S. nuclear policies & strategies
- **Bottom Line: America at great risk without credible nuclear deterrent to apply to each situation above**