



China in US Nuclear War Planning

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China is a secondary adversary in U.S. nuclear planning. The relatively limited size of Chinese nuclear forces means that far fewer U.S. nuclear forces are assigned to strike options against facilities in China compared with Russia. The methodology and principles that guide U.S. nuclear targeting against the two countries, however, are largely the same.

China has been a target for U.S. nuclear weapons since the 1950s - even before the first Chinese nuclear test explosion in 1964. The status of the communist nation in U.S. nuclear warfare planning, however, has been a roller coaster ride over the years. China was initially viewed as a communist threat against Taiwan and South Korea and was targeted by SIOP and theater nuclear forces accordingly. Then in the 1970s and early 1980s, China became a "partner" to the United States in the effort to contain the Soviet Union, and China was formally removed from SIOP. In November 1997, however, President Clinton ordered a widening of nuclear targeting of Chinese facilities and the U.S. Strategic Command subsequently brought China back into the SIOP.

The items below provide links to specific documents relating to China and its role in U.S. nuclear policy:

[CINCPAC China threat assessments](#)

["U.S. Nuclear Weapon Policy Toward China: 1998-1995"](#)

["Evolution of China's Nuclear Capability: Implications for U.S. Policy"](#)

"The Elusive Foe: China in U.S. Nuclear War Planning" (forthcoming)

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