

The Nautilus Institute Nuclear Strategy Project: White Paper Post-Start II Arms Control

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After the Nuclear Posture Review was completed in September 1994 and START I entered into force three months later, STRATCOM began preparing for what would come after START II. To ensure international support for an indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) at the NPT Review and Extension conference in New York in April 1995, the White House promised further nuclear reductions in compliance with the treaty's Article VI.

Coinciding with the conference, President Clinton in the late spring of 1995 signed into effect Presidential Decision Directive 37 (PDD-37) to provide guidance to the agencies on arms control after START II. PDD-37 included a list of four "first principles" that should guide the U.S. approach to arms control:

- Deterrence
- Stability
- Equivalence
- Hedge

In preparation for the next phase, CINCSTRAT Admiral Chiles directed the Policy and Doctrine Branch (J512) to prepare a paper that outlined STRATCOM's position on post-START II arms control. The resulting white paper was prepared under the direction of Air Force Major J. L. Hogler and approved by the Strategy and Policy Division on 16 September 1996. The white paper based its analysis on the four principles in PDD-37, which was described as the "primary source" for guiding post-START II arms control.

Three of the four principles were well known to STRATCOM from the Sun City and Sun City Extended studies that determined the Nuclear Posture Review. The fourth principle, equivalence, was a new term, however, but closely linked to stability and the increasingly important issues of transparency and irreversibility of future reductions. The white paper used these four principles to identify U.S. objectives for post-START II arms control:

- Protect the U.S. Strategic nuclear delivery vehicle force structure. Because no new platforms are planned, "it's important to retain as many of the existing ones as possible." (Hedge)
- Retain U.S. warheads at a level consistent with war-fighting needs. (Deterrence)

- Minimize the impact of those Russian systems, [deleted], that pose the greatest threat to U.S. interests. (Deterrence, Stability)
- Reduce and eliminate U.S. and Russian non-deployed warheads and fissile materials. (Equivalence, Stability)
- Address non-strategic nuclear forces as part of the overall effort to stem the proliferation threat. [deleted]. (Equivalence, Stability)

Based on these principles, the white paper first examined the U.S. force structure to identify those forces that must be protected (i.e. the most capable) and those that can be included in further reductions. Next it examined the Russian force structure, but in this effort the methodology was the reverse: the most threatening forces would also be the most important candidates for negotiated reductions. Finally the white paper discussed the issues of safeguards, transparency, and irreversibility, warhead elimination, and disposition of fissile materials.

Since the principle of *warfighting* was a primary determinant for how deep the cuts could go, the influence of target selection in counterforce strategies became a major roadblock to too deep reductions. The white paper's list of potential post-START II arms control actions recommended against reducing strategic offensive weapons lower than 2,000-2,500. Within this constraint, the paper outlined the various force structure combinations of mainly SSBNs and bombers. It concluded that the large number of air-launched cruise missiles still allocated to B-52H bombers would have a significant impact on how many SSBNs could be retained. SSBNs form part of the Twin Triad outlined in the Phoenix Study, this factor means that the less valuable bombers would be a likely candidate for cuts under the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review. Reducing U.S. ICBMs below 500 Minuteman III, however, would only have "modest value" in encouraging Russia to accept mobile ICBM reductions. Besides, STRATCOM concluded, further reductions in the U.S. ICBM "erodes the number of [Russian] strategic targets in the U.S. and could be considered destabilizing."

The white paper ended by combining this three-part analysis into a comprehensive recommendation for a post-START II arms control framework. Although much of this recommendation remains classified, it reveals important principles that likely still color the current U.S. approach to deep cuts. Foremost among these principles was that warheads from already accomplished cuts should be dealt with *prior* to achieving further reductions. Key to this objective was an increase in transparency and irreversibility, and the most important goal was to obtain verifiable data about total warhead numbers. The issue of fissile material disposition, however, was less important. In what seemed to be a confirmation of the Threat Reduction Program in Russia, the white paper concluded that "it is not desirable to proceed with warhead elimination until detailed, verifiable information on the strategic and nonstrategic stockpiles is obtained." On the other hand, although fissile material disposition was described as "a worthy goal," STRATCOM pointed out that failure to reach an agreement on the disposition of fissile material from eliminated warheads "should not be a showstopper" for deeper cuts.

A copy of the declassified version of the white paper is provided through the link in the right hand bar.

FOIA documents

USSTRATCOM, Major J. L. Hogler, USAF, "[Post START II Arms Control](#)," 18 September 1996. Secret. Partially declassified and released to [Joshua Handler](#) from Princeton University under the Freedom of Information Act.

Summary report

["The Matrix of Deterrence"](#)

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