



## OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN

### FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1977–1980, VOLUME IV, NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

## 116. Memorandum From the Military Assistant to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Odom) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski)<sup>1</sup>

Washington, March 27, 1979

### SUBJECT

The Targeting Study: Desired Outcomes

I want to make a few points for you to keep in mind at the SCC on the Targeting Study. There is a real danger that the mix of antithetical theologies will paralyze our efforts to move our defense establishment from a "1914" posture (i.e., one big war plan which cannot support any conceivable war aims, an irreversible war plan, no plans for economic and other [Page 54.7] civil mobilization, and a misplaced belief that the war will be short) to a posture that allows our military power to be more politically useful. The following outcomes, achieved not at this SCC but at least by the end of the series of SCC which Victor has scheduled, would accomplish a major favorable change. (S)

I. *A general targeting policy of "flexibility"*. This does not mean breaking the SIOP up into small pieces. It means a targeting capability in addition to the SIOP. It means the capability to identify and locate a target after the conflict starts, to fire a nuclear strike which destroys the target with as little undersired collateral damage as possible, and to make a post-strike assessment which accurately reports the damaged achieved. It also means the capability to coordinate strategic nuclear fires with other military operations by land, naval, and air forces. (TS)

II. *Divest ourselves of the illusion that time urgent "hard target kill" (HTK) capability in large amounts is "destabilizing."* There are many targets other than ICBMs for HTK. For example, destroying enemy C3I, attacking conventional forces of the second echelon and strategic reserve, neutralizing attacks on flanks or outside a theater of war. For any targeting problem where limiting collateral damage is desirable, HTK becomes attractive. We need all the HTK we can get. (S)

III. *Task Defense and the JCS to develop a counter-C3I doctrine.* This aspect of our targeting is highly underdeveloped. It will take several years of work. (S)

IV. *Create a mechanism for more and continuous interaction between the political leadership and military planners.* You will receive a lot of pressure to create special working groups, putting State and others in the military planning loop. Brown and the JCS will balk. State is not the "political leadership." The Secretary of State was not elected and has no statutory authority to give "political guidance." Political guidance means Presidential guidance. We already have a highly effective system for IVORY ITEM exercises. The answer to the "mechanism" problem is to develop it as an excursion within the IVORY ITEM group. David asked me last fall to work up some LNO scenarios for this purpose. I have been in touch with the J-3, the shop that develops such exercises, and they have been working on scenarios for several months. Let's keep things in the IVORY ITEM context. Harold Brown will support you on this.

V. *The C3I problem must be faced not only in Defense but also in FEMA.* This outcome is beyond the targeting study, but it is crucial for the “flexible” approach to targeting. Keep it in mind as a separate problem for SCCs but integral to targeting capabilities. (S)

*Some Caveats.* We cannot achieve all these outcomes in one SCC meeting, or even four or five, but we can avoid decisions that block their eventual achievement. Let me cite an example of counter-productive decisions. (S)

The first of the nine principles of war is the OBJECTIVE: DESTROY THE ENEMY ARMY OR ITS ABILITY TO FIGHT. [Page 54,8] When Napoleon took Moscow and ceased chasing the Russian Army, he violated that principle. He lost. When we target 70 percent of economic recovery capability, we have little idea of the impact on Soviet forces. It can't be large. Most of our SIOP criteria are analogous to Napoleon's objective: Moscow. When you speak of targeting Russians, this does not necessarily kill Soviet military forces. In general, population per se is a wasteful target. Breaking the SIOP into small pieces may also fail to kill Soviet forces, especially theater forces. An SCC outcome that merely replaces old SIOP criteria (e.g., 70 percent of economic recovery) with new SIOP criteria (e.g. 60 percent of all Great Russians and 50 percent of Ukrainians) is a paralyzing, non-change decision. An *effective decision* will call for flexibility in targeting in support of other military operations, which are tailored to particular war aims as they are developed for a particular future situation. It will move us away from the dangerous “1914” syndrome.

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1. Source: Carter Library, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Defense/Security, Utgoff, Box 202, Targeting: Strategic Nuclear Forces: 1–6/79. Top Secret.↵