DOD and the Nuclear Mission

By CLARK A. MURDOCK

This article presents an advocacy narrative for the still important contributions that nuclear weapons make to U.S. security and outlines a set of recommendations for how the Department of Defense (DOD) should organize for the nuclear mission. After first addressing the role of nuclear weapons in 21st-century international affairs and national security, this article reviews how the nuclear mission has been neglected in the post–Cold War era and suggests what actions are needed to resuscitate the nuclear deterrent.

This *advocacy narrative* is not intended to be "balanced." The downside risks of this option ought to be presented in an advocacy narrative for the strategic options that *deemphasizes* nuclear weapons. When U.S. Presidents face strategic choices on important issues on which there is significant disagreement on the "basics," they must choose among fundamentally different courses of action rather than choosing the best way to execute a particular course of action. Trying to decide which actions the Government should take, without knowing which end-ways-means chain is being followed, results in purposeless decisions. As with other big issues, when it comes to nuclear strategy, policy, and force structure, one has to know where he is going before he can start moving in that direction.

Nuclear Weapons Now

In addition to their proven utility as a means to terminate a major conventional war, nuclear weapons were the principal instruments used by the great powers during the Cold War to deter each other. From a systemic perspective, nuclear deterrence suppressed the level of violence associated with major power competition: wartime fatalities consumed 2 percent of the world's population in the 1600s and 1700s, 1 percent in the 1800s, 1.5 percent in World War I, and 2.5 percent in World War II, but one-tenth of 1 percent during the

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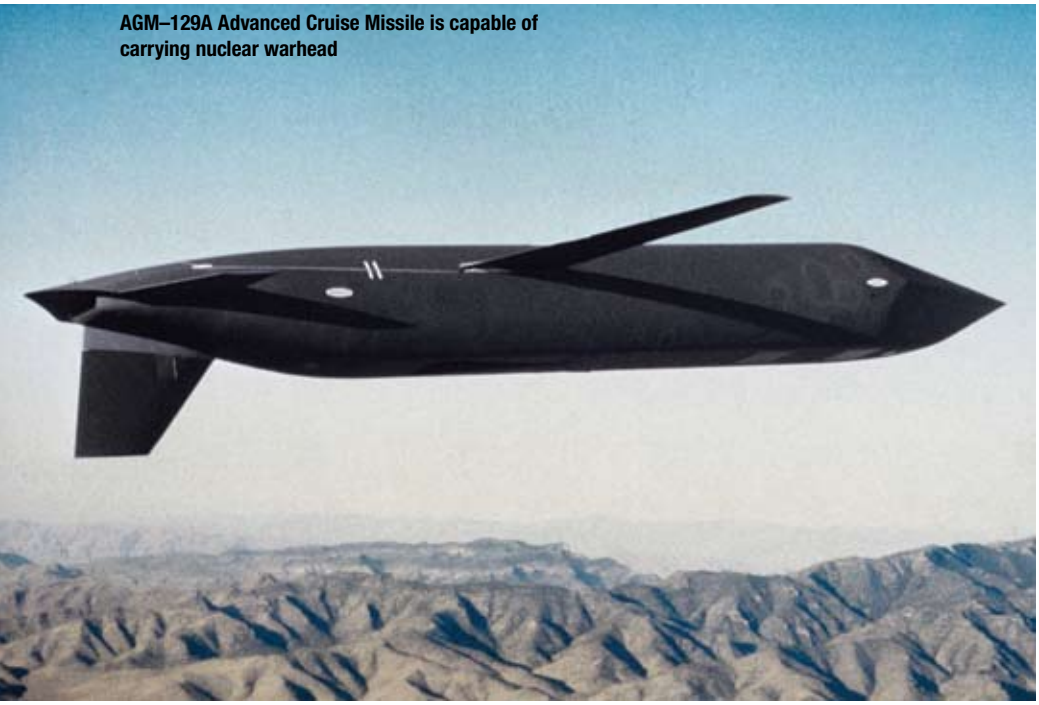
Military personnel observe atomic explosion on Bikini Atoll

Atomic bomb test on Bikini Atoll engulfs prepositioned ships, 1946

Cold War (not including the Korean War, which pushed fatalities up to one-half of 1 percent). A leading practitioner of the art of nuclear deterrence, Sir Michael Quinlan, aptly observed, "Better a world with nuclear weapons but no major war, than one with major war but no nuclear weapons."[1]

That the violence-suppressive effect of nuclear weapons will continue into the 21st century was recently underscored by comments made by Cold War deterrent theorist and Nobel economics laureate Thomas Schelling. At a World Economic Forum retreat, Schelling recalled that no state that has developed nuclear weapons has ever been attacked by another state and that no state armed with nuclear weapons has ever attacked another state similarly armed.[2] While it does not make this author sanguine about the risks of further nuclear proliferation to states, regimes, or individuals that are more difficult to deter, it seems that *to date* nuclear weapons have made both possessors and their adversaries much more cautious about embarking on courses that could escalate to nuclear use.



AGM–129A Advanced Cruise Missile is capable of carrying nuclear warhead

U.S. Air Force

Although the United States appears to be allergic to all things nuclear, much of the rest of the world remains intensely interested in nuclear weapons. Those states that have them are modernizing their inventories; North Korea has paid dearly (politically and economically) to join the nuclear club; Iran is rapidly closing the capabilities gap to a weapons program; and North Korea's and Iran's neighbors, many of them U.S. allies, are pondering whether they might need to go nuclear as well. More particularly:

- The October 2006 North Korean nuclear test has stimulated an open debate in Japan—a "latent" nuclear power with a most severe nuclear allergy—about whether its evolution into a "normal" country should include membership in the nuclear club.[3]
- In October 2006, two articles appeared in the *Korea Times* quoting anonymous Korean nuclear scientists alleging that South Korea has the technical capability to produce a uranium-based weapon "within one year" and a plutonium-based weapon within "a couple of years" if the country required an independent deterrent "in an emergency."[4]
- A February 2008 staff report from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee found that "one impact of Iran's nuclear program has been to catalyze Turkey's nuclear energy development efforts" and that "Turkish perceptions of . . . the reliability of the U.S. security guarantee . . . will have an indirect but significant impact on Turkey's nuclear weapons decisions."[5]

States that have nuclear weapons, including those with stated ambitions to counterbalance U.S. power, are modernizing their inventories, delivery systems, and nuclear use doctrines:

- Russia now rejects a no-first-use policy for its nuclear weapons and follows a "more-bang-for-the-ruble" approach that gives nuclear modernization priority over that for conventional forces.
- China continues to invest in its strategic arsenal and capabilities with the objective of improving its power projection ability.[6] The addition of new ballistic and air- and ground-launched cruise missiles will give Beijing a more survivable and flexible nuclear force.[7]

Nation-states pursue nuclear status for many reasons. Nuclear weapons are seen as the ultimate guarantee of national sovereignty and survival; their possession is believed to confer world-class status; and they can serve as the "great equalizer" for nations facing competitors with significantly greater conventional military power.

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These are very strong incentives for acquiring nuclear weapons in a Hobbesian international system with weak central governance and few shared international norms. It is hard to disagree with Harold Brown and John Deutch: the notion of a world without nuclear weapons is a fantasy. Few Americans would give them up if other nations still possessed them. And if the world's strongest military power by far cannot give them up first, who can?

Nuclear weapons are unique in their capacity to inflict massive damage almost instantaneously. Their continued utility in the world of nation-states makes the "vision" of a world without nuclear weapons an illusion. The history of warfare is absolute—we humans are very inventive at finding new ways of killing each other, and once we do, we use them. At some point, hopefully as far in the future as we can make it, a nonstate actor is likely to use a nuclear device in a terrorist attack, and that employment by a nonstate actor is likely to affect how post-use nuclear deterrence works.

In retrospect, it has actually been quite remarkable that nuclear weapons have not

been used since 1945. It would be even more astonishing if they were not used during the next 60 years. Deterring nuclear attacks against the United States by multiple nuclear-armed regional adversaries is, at the least, more problematic than Cold War nuclear deterrence.[8] The author has participated in several "scenario seminars" in which a small nuclear-armed state in a conflict resorts to early use of nuclear weapons in an effort to compel the United States (by escalating across the nuclear threshold) to stop its conventional campaign against it. The National Defense University's Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction has concluded that "U.S. policymakers and military planners [while remaining focused on terrorist threats] should also take seriously the possibility of next state use" and advised that "[p]rudent policy should assume a next use of nuclear weapons is becoming more likely and will be a shock to the international system, especially if it is deemed successful in achieving the user's objectives."[9] It is necessary, not just prudent, to think how it will work in the post–next-nuclear-use era, if only for the purpose of delaying the start-date of that era for as long as possible.

Contributions to Security

The United States continues to say that nuclear deterrence is "critical"; the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) *Report* maintains that the U.S. nuclear deterrent is a "keystone of national power."[10] Upon her arrival in Japan days after the North Korean nuclear test, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice invoked the U.S. nuclear deterrent when she stated, "The United States has the will and the capability to meet the full range—and I underscore the full range—of its deterrent and security commitments to Japan."[11] Similarly, former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld agreed to a joint communiqué with the visiting South Korean defense minister on October 20, 2006, that "offered assurances of firm U.S. commitment and immediate support to the Republic of Korea, including continuation of the extended deterrence offered by the U.S. nuclear umbrella, consistent with the mutual defense treaty."[12] The continued need for a U.S. nuclear deterrent was underscored by recently retired U.S. Central Command commander General John Abizaid, USA, who stated flatly in September 2007, "I believe nuclear deterrence will work with the Iranians."[13] Evidently, the United States still needs a nuclear deterrent and acts as if it has one. But how credible is it?

During the Cold War, a credible nuclear deterrent depended on whether the Soviet Union (and others) believed we had the will and capability to carry out our threats. Changes in nuclear strategy—for example, from massive retaliation to flexible response—were driven by our perceptions of which threats would be most credible to those adversaries. The nuclear arms race was not just about building nuclear capabilities; it was about demonstrating resolve. One of the ways of demonstrating how serious we were about nuclear deterrence was to build more weapons. Another way was to test them.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the world's only conventional superpower led senior officials in Washington to greatly downgrade the value of nuclear weapons. President George H.W. Bush unilaterally eliminated entire classes of short-range nuclear weapons (Army systems and those on surface naval systems)

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Secretary Gates and Air Force Space Command commander Gen Kehler prepare to address Space Command leaders about increased focus on nuclear mission

U.S. Air Force (Matt Lohr)

and withdrew almost all forward-deployed tactical nuclear weapons (with the exception of small inventories in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

The effectiveness of Secretary of State James Baker's "calculated ambiguity" in threatening Iraq on the eve of the first Gulf War with "terrible consequences" if Iraq used chemical weapons is still debated.[14] Whatever the utility of this U.S. nuclear threat intended to deter a proximate action, it was undermined by the memoirs of the senior policymakers involved. President George H.W. Bush and General Brent Scowcroft wrote that they had no intention of using nuclear weapons during that operation.[15] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, when asked by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney about nuclear options, stated, "Let's not even think about nukes. You know we're not going to let the genie loose."[16] It is hard to make credible threats when we tell the world (including future adversaries) that we were bluffing the last time we made one.

The Clinton administration conducted a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) that concluded that "no new strategic systems are under development or planned."[17] In fact, the Assistant Secretary of Defense charged with the NPR stated, "Our intention is to have a military that doesn't need to use [nuclear, biological, and chemical] weapons. We can use conventional forces to prevail anywhere in the world."[18] Once its NPR was concluded, the administration paid little attention to U.S. nuclear strategy and policy, focusing instead on nuclear nonproliferation and counterproliferation issues.

The administration of President George W. Bush initially paid considerable attention to nuclear issues. That resulted in a May 2001 speech announcing the administration's commitment to build a ballistic missile defense, abrogate the 1970 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and unilaterally reduce the U.S. inventory of nuclear weapons. At that time, President Bush stated he was "committed to achieving a credible deterrent with the lowest-possible number of nuclear weapons consistent with our national security needs, including our obligations to our allies."[19]

Secretary Rumsfeld launched his NPR in late spring 2001. The decisions made during the 2001 NPR (the agreement later codified in the Moscow Treaty with Russia to reduce long-range nuclear weapons inventories to 1,700–2,200 operationally deployed warheads and the formal U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty) are well known; the NPR report itself is not, as it was never released in an unclassified form.[20] In hindsight, many believe that the administration missed a big opportunity to engage Congress on a new vision for America's nuclear forces.

Conceptually, the NPR broke new ground in several areas. The United States would no longer plan, size, or shape its forces vis-à-vis Russia, enabling greater stockpile reductions. The review underscored the critical need to refurbish the nuclear weapons complex. It also unveiled a new concept for U.S. strategic forces and capabilities—the New Triad. The New Triad took the Old Triad, comprised of intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and bombers and placed them within a broader portfolio of strategic capabilities: strike (nonnuclear and nuclear), defense (active and passive), and a responsive nuclear infrastructure. The legs are integrated through command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visits Natanz Uranium Enrichment Facility

AP/Wide World Photo

Although the Nuclear Posture Review put the United States on a more sound policy footing, it failed to create the political foundation or generate the debate, particularly in Congress, for implementing that policy. The report itself also undercut both the credibility of the nuclear deterrent and the rationale for modernizing U.S. nuclear forces by "mainstreaming" nuclear weapons, making them merely one of several offensive "strategic capabilities" despite their unique destructive properties and strategic role. The New Triad offensive forces include conventional, nonkinetic (that is, cyberwarfare), and nonconventional (that is, nuclear forces). The effect of this downgrading has been a continuation of the neglect of things nuclear. This should not have been surprising since Secretary Rumsfeld, in his cover letter to the report, stated or implied six times that one of the principal virtues of the NPR is that it reduced U.S. reliance on nuclear weapons. If this is the kind of advocacy that nuclear weapons received in a "nuclear posture review," it is not hard to envision how weakly they are advocated when they are "mainstreamed" with other capabilities in DOD's constant competition for defense dollars.

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Assuming some nuclear weapons remain in the world, the United States must have them, and the threat of retaliation must be credible. Having a credible nuclear deterrent requires having a military that is *serious* about sustaining its nuclear capability, strategy, and doctrine. The prevailing view in today's military, where the operational perspective of the "warfighter" is dominant, is that nuclear weapons lack utility because they are not "useable," which renders them not "interesting" (particularly from a career perspective) and perceived to be not "needed" (since the United States is the world's only conventional superpower).

The views of General James Cartwright, USMC, U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) commander from July 2004 to August 2007, are both illustrative and illuminating. In advocating that a conventional missile be substituted for a nuclear-tipped missile on the Trident submarine, General Cartwright made the following statements to Congress in early 2007:

We have a prompt delivery capability on alert today, but it is configured with nuclear weapons, which limits the options available to our decisionmakers and may reduce the credibility of our deterrence.[21]

A few weeks later, he further told Congress:

[W]*e lack the capability to respond promptly to globally dispersed or fleeting threats without resorting to nuclear weapons. As good as they are, we simply cannot be everywhere with our general-purpose conventional forces, and use of a nuclear weapons system in prompt response may be no choice at all.*[22]

If reliance on nuclear weapons weakens deterrence, then nuclear capabilities, by definition, are not very useful. In one of his first extensive interviews after becoming Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Cartwright "called the notion of a temptingly low-yield [nuclear] weapon—generally defined as 1 to 10 kilotons—a 'good academic argument,' one 'that deals more with the 'what if'" and went on to say:

None of them [policy advocates of low-yield nuclear weapons] *have had the responsibility or the accountability* [to launch such weapons]. . . . *it is not just a little bit* [of] *a weapon of mass destruction. It is going to change not just that country's future, but all of our futures when we start using these things, big or little.*[23]

Although General Cartwright is clearly one of the most respected and influential leaders of today's military, these statements make one long for the "bad old days" of the Cold War when our nuclear deterrent was "strong," in part because we drew clearly articulated lines determining the suitability of nuclear retaliation that underscored the unique role played by nuclear forces. "Mainstreaming" our nuclear deterrent in DOD has devalued it, and its credibility is further undermined by our military practitioners believing what our political leaders said after the last time they threatened to use nukes—"we didn't really mean it."

Although the 2001 QDR included deterrence as one of the four defense policy goals, along with assurance, dissuasion, and defeat, the Bush administration paid little attention to deterrence during its first term because the post-9/11 salient nuclear threat was from terrorist acquisition and use.[24] Vice President Cheney stated at the Heritage Foundation in October 2003:

The strategy of deterrence . . . will no longer do. Our terrorist enemy has no country to defend. No assets to destroy in order to discourage an attack. . . . There is only one way to protect ourselves . . . to destroy the terrorists before they can launch further attacks against the United States.[25]

Not only was preemption the preferred strategy for dealing with nuclear terrorism, but preventive war was also the strategy for dealing with the threat of "unbalanced dictators" armed with nukes. Of course, going to war to prevent Saddam Hussein from getting nuclear weapons conveyed our belief that we would have been deterred if he had gotten them—implicitly conceding that threats of nuclear retaliation cannot dissuade the pursuit of these capabilities. Similarly, repeated statements by midlevel DOD officials during the first Bush administration that the United States needs new nuclear capabilities that are low collateral, lower yield, and more accurate to ensure that its nuclear deterrent remains credible raise an obvious question: what happens to the credibility of our nuclear deterrent—to ourselves, our allies and friends, and our adversaries—if there are no new nuclear capabilities?

Deterrence made a comeback during the Bush administration's second term when the concept of "tailored deterrence" was adopted in the 2006 QDR Report. Keith Payne, noted deterrence theorist and a deputy assistant secretary of defense during the 2001 NPR, set forth the "mandate for tailored deterrence" in March 2004:

[D]*eterrence threats based on the generally high yields of the Cold War arsenal may not appear credible, given the excessive civilian destruction likely to occur. . . . Clearly, some reasonable and much needed steps to better align U.S. deterrence policy to the realities of the new era include broadening*

U.S. deterrent threat options . . . seeking an understanding of the opponents' intentions and the flexibility to tailor deterrence to specific requirements of foe, time, and place.[26]

The 2006 QDR defined *tailored deterrence* in the New Triad context as the "forces and capabilities needed for deterrence, reflecting a shift from 'one size fits all' deterrence toward more tailorable capabilities to deter advanced military powers, regional WMD states or non-state terrorists."[27] The most significant shortcoming embedded in this definition, *from the perspective of the U.S. nuclear deterrent*, was the continued "mainstreaming" of things nuclear inside DOD and the application of "tailored deterrence" to "nondeterrable" nonstate terrorists.

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The first steps in any recovery program are understanding and taking ownership. Resuscitating the U.S. nuclear deterrent must begin with the recognition that nuclear weapons are unique capabilities and play unique roles in both warfare and international affairs. That the United States needs a nuclear deterrent in the post-9/11 era is self-evident:

- Deterring nuclear attacks against the United States is still a first order requirement. Nation-states still possess nuclear capabilities that threaten our very existence (Russia today, perhaps China tomorrow) and can inflict "unacceptable damage" (any state that has nuclear weapons).
- U.S. allies and friends that do not possess nuclear weapons depend on our extended nuclear deterrent. The State Department's International Security Advisory Board stated flatly: "There is clear evidence in diplomatic channels that U.S. assurances to include the nuclear umbrella have been, and continue to be, the single most important reason many allies have foresworn nuclear weapons."[28]

The classic deterrence question has always been "deter *whom* from doing *what* against *whom*." How far the U.S. nuclear deterrent could be "extended" beyond direct nuclear threats to the United States will continue to be the subject of great debate in the post-9/11 era. The discussion sparked by the "new" concept of tailored deterrence has already enhanced our understanding of deterrence. M. Elaine Bunn of the Institute for National Strategic Studies, for example, argues persuasively that the credibility of our deterrent depends, inter alia, on our *communications*, defined as "the kinds of messages the United States would send in its words or actions that contribute to (or detract from) its efforts to deter specific actors, in both peacetime and crisis situations."[29] The imperative for making the nuclear mission a top priority for DOD is indisputable: nuclear weapons exist, numerous nation-states possess them, more nation-states are likely to acquire them, and the risk that nuclear weapons will be used is growing.

Organizing the Mission

In Washington, effective policy representation of any issue requires organizational and bureaucratic stature. Over the past 15 years, the bureaucratic actors focused on nuclear weapons have either disappeared or been incorporated (that is, mainstreamed) into other agencies. Moreover, the time and attention devoted to nuclear issues by senior policymakers—the scarcest resource in official Washington—has precipitously declined. The "nuclear suitcase" still follows the President around, but this appears to most as an anachronism of the Cold War rather than an indicator of current strategic priorities.

Who is involved in the nuclear mission? Nuclear weapons are really the "President's weapons"—no other military capability requires the explicit approval of the President before it can be employed for any purpose. DOD executes the nuclear mission for the President. USSTRATCOM, under the authority of the President and the Secretary of Defense, generates the requirements for nuclear weapons, plans for them, and would conduct any operations involving them. The Navy and Air Force provide delivery systems for nuclear weapons and personnel trained in the planning and conduct of nuclear operations. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) oversees the national laboratories, production plants, and testing facilities that provide nuclear warheads to DOD. During the height of the Cold War, the nuclear mission was clearly top dog, as DOD withheld forces from other missions to ensure that it could exercise the Single Integrated Operating Plan at a moment's notice. Today, however, the nuclear mission has fallen on hard times.

The recent history of USSTRATCOM illustrates how far the nuclear mission has declined in organizational status. On October 1, 2002, U.S. Space Command was merged into USSTRATCOM, and since that time the nuclear mission has been increasingly diluted as new responsibilities have been incorporated. By 2006, USSTRATCOM had assumed responsibility for command and control of strategic forces, global strike, military space operations, computer network operations, information operations, global intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, strategic warning and intelligence assessments, and combating weapons of mass destruction.[30] In the summer of 2002, the highest ranking individual at USSTRATCOM who thought about nothing but nuclear issues was its four-star commander; today, it is a retired lieutenant colonel who heads up the Nuclear Command and Control Office (the only place where the word "nuclear" appears on the USSTRATCOM organizational chart).[31] That is five levels down the bureaucratic food chain in less than 4 years.

This post–Cold War loss of organizational status was echoed on the civilian side of the house in DOD. At the end of the Cold War, the Office of the Secretary of Defense's assistant secretary for international security policy focused largely on nuclear issues; now, it is one of several accounts for the deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategic forces. The Defense Nuclear Agency (DNA) served over the years (in several different incarnations) as the Secretary's principal technical advisor for nuclear weapons. By 1998, the DNA had become the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, which has a broad anti-WMD mandate, with DNA's original role as the civilian nuclear proponent inside DOD taking (at most) tertiary priority.

The organizational decline of the nuclear mission in the military Services has been almost as dramatic. In January 1997, then chief of staff of the Air Force, Ronald Fogelman, created an office (AF/XON) headed by a two-star general in order to have a single button on the Air Staff for nuclear issues. Today, that office no longer exists, and the highest ranking Air Force officer in the Pentagon with responsibility

for nothing but nuclear matters is a colonel. Members of the nuclear community within both Services privately express the belief that their Services would divest themselves of the nuclear mission in a heartbeat if they would not lose force structure. The Air Force's recent Bent Spear incident, in which six nuclear-armed cruise missiles were left unattended for 36 hours while being flown from one air base to another,[32] raises the disturbing issue of how much the nuclear mission's decline has eroded the "nuclear competence" of the military Services. Subsequently, following the revelation that the Air Force and Defense Logistics Agency had mistakenly sent four nuclear fuses to Taiwan, the Air Force failed a security inspection at Minot Air Force Base.

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The cumulative effect of these incidents led Defense Secretary Robert Gates to fire the secretary and chief of staff of the Air Force.

U.S. nuclear warheads, and the infrastructure that supports their design and production, have suffered from post–Cold War benign neglect. The nuclear enterprise is currently behind on virtually every task assigned to it, from stockpile surveillance to weapons dismantlement (although the situation has improved in the last year). Perhaps worse, the workforce continues to age, as the retirement of experienced designers creates an ominous gap in the Nation's nuclear weapons design knowledge. The last warheads the United States produced were designed in the 1970s, assembled during the 1980s, and were intended to last 10 to 15 years.

During the Cold War, confidence that U.S. nuclear weapons would perform as advertised was attained through rigorous nuclear testing. These tests, which both identified and rectified problems in the nuclear warhead, were designed to test nuclear yield, not the effects of weapon longevity. To replace testing as a means of sustaining confidence in the stockpile, the United States embarked on the Science-based Stockpile Stewardship Program, a costly ($2 billion–$3 billion per year), technically complicated program relying heavily on computer simulations. Although the national laboratory directors and USSTRATCOM commander continue to give Congress annual certifications of the reliability of the nuclear stockpile, the uncertainty associated with certifying decades-old systems without testing has led NNSA to preserve the ability to conduct underground tests in the event of unforeseen problems.[33]

The decay of the U.S. nuclear enterprise is met with increasing apathy—and at times, antipathy—inside the Beltway. Although Secretary Gates, by his recent actions that include firing Air Force leadership and establishing the Schlesinger Commission to examine nuclear stewardship in the Air Force and DOD, has started to reverse this process. During the Cold War, nuclear issues often turned national elections (for example, the so-called missile gap in 1960) and consumed Congress (for example, alternative basing schemes for the Peacekeeper missile). Today, there are "mini-debates" about specific programs, such as the study of the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP), but no discussion of the overall strategy and role for U.S. nuclear forces. The "inside the Beltway" nuclear allergy has become so strong that one prominent legislator privately offered in early 2005, "Take the word 'nuclear' out of RNEP and we'll give it to you" (which was done).

Resuscitating the credibility of the U.S. nuclear deterrent in an era of nuclear multipolarity requires that Washington gets serious about its nuclear strategy, policy, and force posture. Since nuclear weapons belong to the President, leadership on these issues must start at the top and become a key priority for the next administration.

The lack of serious attention to nuclear matters by senior leadership in the Pentagon and the organizational decline of the nuclear mission must be undone. Since nuclear weapons are unique and special capabilities, they need the same approach as that given to special operations forces. In the case of special operations, it was repeated operational failures (particularly *Desert One*) that gave political impetus to the creation of U.S. Special Operations Command. We cannot afford similar failures in the nuclear realm. It is time to go "back to the future" and establish a U.S. Nuclear Forces Command that *could* have (pending further analysis) the following attributes:

- established as a subordinate command in USSTRATCOM and headed by a three-star general or admiral; like other combatant commands, this U.S. Nuclear Forces Command would function as a standing joint task force
- provided with budget and acquisition authority (including a Major Force Program for nuclear capabilities)
- supported by NNSA and a smaller, rationalized complex focused solely on the nuclear mission; would end DOE risk-averse micromanagement of the nuclear complex and leave it to focus on nuclear energy; would consolidate work on the nuclear warhead at one of the national laboratories and "other" activity (non-weapons work) at the other laboratory (which could stay with DOE).

To ensure that the President and Secretary of Defense receive the necessary support on nuclear matters, the President needs a National Security Council special assistant for nuclear issues (to help integrate and harmonize nuclear policy, including communications, across the U.S. Government), and the Secretary of Defense needs a congressionally confirmed assistant secretary for nuclear matters (to provide effective advocacy inside the Pentagon).

A stockpile designed for a 1980s threat is not relevant to today's challenges. Getting serious about nuclear weapons means *doing* things with them—thinking about them, producing them, deploying them, and exercising with them so threats to employ them will be taken seriously. It also will require some straight talk to the international community, telling them that, like *all* other nuclear weapons states, the United States has no intention of getting rid of its nuclear weapons for the foreseeable future. This deliberately active approach is the only way to resuscitate the nuclear deterrent. And it is far better for the United States to have a credible nuclear deterrent than to feel compelled to employ a nuclear weapon because its nuclear deterrent failed. **JFQ**

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NOTES

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[19] President George W. Bush, remarks by the President to Students and Faculty at National Defense University, May 1, 2001, available at <www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/05/20010501-10.html>.

[20] Portions of the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review report were leaked and posted on Web sites around the globe, often without the broader political context that framed the report's key conclusions. This undoubtedly generated undue skepticism toward the administration's nuclear initiatives. See Globalsecurity.org, "Nuclear Posture Review [Excerpts]," Weapons of Mass Destruction (January 8, 2002).

[21] Statement of General James E. Cartwright, USMC, Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, before the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, House Armed Services Committee, on U.S. Strategic Command, March 8, 2007.

[22] Statement of General James E. Cartwright, USMC, Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, before the Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, House Committee on Appropriations, on U.S. Strategic Command, March 29, 2007.

[23] Elaine M. Grossman, "Senior U.S. General Sees High Nuclear Threshold," Global Security Newswire, October 22, 2007, available at <www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2007_10_22.html#58872303>.

[24] Elbridge Colby, "Restoring Deterrence," *Orbis* 51, no. 3 (Summer 2007), 413–414.

[25] The White House, remarks by the Vice President to the Heritage Foundation, October 10, 2003, available at <www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/10/20031010-1.html>.

[26] Amy F. Woolf, "Nuclear Weapons in U.S. National Security Policy: Past, Present, and Prospects," CRS Report for Congress (October 29, 2007), 11.

[27] DOD, 2006 QDR Report, 4, 48.

[28] International Security Advisory Board, *Report on Discouraging a Cascade of Nuclear Weapons States*, October 19, 2007, 23.

[29] M. Elaine Bunn, *Can Deterrence Be Tailored?* Strategic Forum No. 225 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, January 2007), 1.

[30] Command Historian's Office, U.S. Strategic Command, "History of the United States Strategic Command, June 1, 1992–October 1, 2002," January 2004, 71–76.

[31] Close observers of the Omaha-based command, while noting that General Cartwright had an excellent command of nuclear issues, estimate privately that USSTRATCOM's senior leadership spends about 5 percent of their time on nuclear issues.

[32] Joby Warrick and Walter Pincus, "The Saga of a Bent Spear," *The Washington Post*, September 23, 2007, A01.

[33] See Testimony of Linton F. Brooks, National Nuclear Security Administration, before the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, House Armed Services Committee, March 2, 2005.