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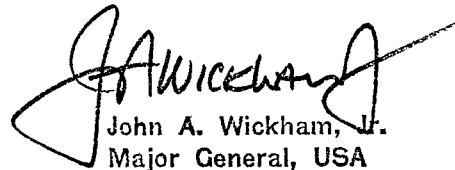
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

10 APR 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL SCOWCROFT

SUBJECT: Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy

A copy of the nuclear weapons employment policy guidance issued by the Secretary of Defense, as directed by NSDM 242, is attached for the information of the President.

  
John A. Wickham, Jr.  
Major General, USA  
Military Assistant

Attachment

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POLICY GUIDANCE  
FOR THE  
EMPLOYMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (C)

3 April 1974

Classified by ATSD(AE)  
EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF  
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. EXEMPTION CATEGORY 3

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POLICY GUIDANCE FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

1. Purpose and Scope

This document sets forth U.S. national policy for the employment of nuclear weapons. It includes planning assumptions, objectives and guidelines which take into account current and near-term military capabilities and foreign policy objectives of the United States.

The purpose is to provide guidance to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the preparation of capabilities plans for the employment of strategic and nuclear-capable theater forces in nuclear attacks against the territory or forces of the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and their allies. Air defense, anti-ballistic missile, and anti-submarine warfare forces are not covered by this guidance. This policy will be reflected in the Single Integrated Operational Plan and other nuclear weapons employment plans. This guidance does not cover the policy for development, acquisition and deployment of U.S. forces. These are set forth in the Defense Policy and Planning Guidance.

2. Objectives

a. Deterrence

The principal objectives of U.S. strategy is the deterrence of nuclear and conventional attacks or attempts at coercion under a threat of nuclear and conventional attacks against the United States, its allies, and any nation whose security is vital to the U.S. interests.

b. Escalation Control

-To the extent that deterrence fails, the major objectives are to assure a U.S. position of power and influence and to limit the conflict and its consequences to the United States and its allies. These objectives are to be accomplished through control of escalation, that is: (i) by conducting selected military operations to protect vital U.S. interests and to foreclose enemy opportunities for further aggression; (ii) by attempting to limit the level and scope of violence; and (iii) by holding some vital enemy targets hostage and threatening their subsequent destruction in order to coerce the enemy into negotiating a war termination.

c. General War

To the extent that escalation cannot be controlled, the U.S. objective is to maximize the resultant political, economic and military

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power of the United States relative to the enemy in the post-war period in order to preclude enemy domination. This is to be accomplished: (i) by destruction of those political, economic, and military resources critical to the enemy's post-war power and influence and national and military recovery; (ii) by limitation of damage to the United States and its allies through counterforce operations; and (iii) by maintaining a strategic force in reserve for protection and coercion during and after the war.

### 3. Strategic Concepts

#### a. Control of Escalation

In efforts to control escalation, initial U.S. military operations should focus on actions to protect those interests immediately threatened and actions to foreclose opportunities for further enemy aggression. Such actions, if effective, would serve to diminish enemy expectations of successful aggression. Control of escalation requires both sides to show restraint. Such restraint could stem from a combination of self-interest and coercion. In an effort to deter the enemy from escalation and to coerce him into negotiating a termination of the war acceptable to the United States, the U.S. should maintain the capability to effectively withhold attacks from additional targets highly valued by the enemy leadership.

The following concepts should be embodied in U.S. attack options to permit operations intended to control escalation:

(1) Escalation Boundaries. U.S. nuclear weapon employment plans should provide the National Command Authorities with the ability to conduct nuclear war at various levels of intensity within clearly defined boundaries. These boundaries are intended to signal to the enemy our desire to keep the war limited. To complement escalation boundaries, attack options should be developed which, when selectively withheld by the United States and perceived by the enemy, will serve to deter enemy escalation by holding high value targets hostage.

(2) Trans-Attack Stability. U.S. nuclear attack options most likely to be withheld for the purpose of deterring further enemy escalation should be planned to provide trans-attack stability. That is, there should be high confidence that these options can be withheld over an extended period of conflict and then executed in a timely, effective manner.

(3) Avoidance of the Enemy's National Command and Control. Options should be developed to withhold attacks on: (i) the enemy's highest command structure including soft and hard command centers serving high civil or military authority, and (ii) sensors and communications systems needed

by the enemy leaders to discern the nature of U.S. attacks. The survival of these elements would facilitate control of enemy forces and negotiations to limit and end the war.

b. Relative Post-Attack Power and Influence

Targeting concepts fundamental to securing the relative power and influence of the United States and its allies include: (i) destruction of the national political controls of the enemy; (ii) destruction of those urban, industrial, economic, and other resources most necessary for the enemy's national and military recovery from nuclear war; (iii) destruction or neutralization of those enemy military forces which otherwise could exercise internal control over the post-attack recovery, secure external resources for the enemy's post-attack recovery, and continue to threaten the United States and its allies.

4. Planning Concepts

a. Pre-Planning and Review

It is desirable to pre-plan nuclear employment options to the extent practical for several reasons: (i) to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the forces used, (ii) to provide for rapid and effective communication of orders for execution from the National Command Authorities, and (iii) to provide a solid basis for estimating the consequences of execution. Periodic reviews of the risks, limitations and effectiveness of nuclear employment plans by the National Command Authorities is critical to obtaining timely and appropriate decisions under crisis and combat conditions.

b. Flexibility

Since the full range of politico-military conditions cannot be anticipated, nuclear employment plans should be designed to allow flexible adaptation as events unfold prior to execution. Some sacrifice in overall force effectiveness may be necessary in order to provide optional withholds and adaptation of pre-planned options. Where only general plans may be laid in advance, appropriate organizations and procedures should be established and exercised for the rapid development, assessment and execution of specific options.

c. Responsiveness to Political and Military Objectives

Planning for the employment of nuclear weapons should take into account the overall objectives, particularly of the United States; the interests of friendly and allied states, those on whose territory any such operation might be undertaken; existing arrangements for coordination

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with allied forces and commands in appropriate geographical areas; as well as the immediate and overall military situation.

d. Crisis and Conflict Management

To control escalation will require timely coordination between, and control of, political and diplomatic actions and military actions in the face of rapidly, often obscurely, unfolding events. Accordingly, crisis management procedures and nuclear employment planning procedures should be developed to provide for substantial interaction, during crisis and conflict, between the National Command Authorities, their political and intelligence advisors, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Unified and Specified Commanders with nuclear forces. Such procedures should be periodically exercised and evaluated.

It should be assumed that military actions undertaken during limited nuclear conflict will be conducted with a high degree of control and direction by the National Command Authorities.

e. Attack Option Structure

Employment plans will be structured according to four categories of attack options as follows: (i) Major Attack Options, (ii) Selected Attack Options, (iii) Limited Nuclear Options, and (iv) Regional Nuclear Options.

5. Major and Selected Attack Options

Planning for Major and Selected Attack Options will be directed toward the following objectives and governed by the priorities set forth below.

a. Objectives

(1) Destroy, under all conditions of war initiation, selected economic, and military resources of the enemy critical to post-war recovery. The level of such destruction should be sufficient to achieve a decisive reduction in the enemy's economic power and influence and to prolong markedly the duration of the enemy's post-war recovery.

(2) Destroy the political leadership of the enemy, its control resources, and its military command structure to the extent necessary or practicable in order to neutralize its ability to engage in effective warfare and to exercise internal political control.

(3) Destroy or neutralize, to the extent practicable with available, allocated nuclear forces, the nuclear offensive capabilities of the

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enemy that threaten the United States and its allies in order to assist in limiting damage and to reduce the enemy's forces for nuclear coercion.

(4) Destroy or neutralize, to the extent practicable with available, allocated nuclear forces, the enemy conventional forces, in order to assist in the neutralization of the enemy's overall military capability and to assist in denying the enemy access to external resources.

It is not the intent of this policy guidance to target civilian population per se. Accordingly, planning directed toward the above objectives will not include residential structures as objective targets. Substantial damage to residential structures and population may nevertheless result from targeting that meets the above objectives.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff should commit such forces to plans for Major and Selected Attack Options as necessary and appropriate. This commitment is for planning purposes and should not interfere with appropriate planning and use of such forces in Limited and Regional Nuclear Options. Forces intended for maintenance of a strategic reserve with high trans-attack stability may be included. However, such forces must be withheld unless explicitly authorized for execution and their use must not be essential to meeting the above objectives.

Major and Selected Attack Options should be encompassed in one integrated plan of which individual options cover sub-sets of targets. This integrated plan should provide for selective and sequential execution of individual options. Annex A provides additional guidance for Major and Selected Attack Options.

b. Priorities for Weapon Allocation

The relative emphasis to be used in allocating committed weapons among the objectives listed above is outlined below. The relative emphasis is different for the two sets of planning assumptions listed, namely:

Set I -- Alert forces with damage -- Day-to-day readiness posture, tactical warning received, maximum effort enemy attack on U.S. nuclear forces.

In this case allocate sufficient weapons to meet objective a(1), then allocate in order of decreasing emphasis to objective a(2), objective a(4) and objective a(3).

Set II -- Generated forces without damage -- Advanced readiness posture, no pre-launch damage to U.S. nuclear forces.



In this case allocate sufficient weapons to meet objective a(1); then allocate in order of decreasing emphasis to objective a(3), objective a(2) and objective a(4).

6. Limited and Regional Nuclear Options

a. Limited Nuclear Options

Options may be desired which are intended to observe different or more limited escalation boundaries or seek different or more limited objectives in order to persuade an enemy to terminate hostilities without resorting to larger nuclear exchanges. Options of these characteristics and that attack fixed targets are termed Limited Nuclear Options. They will be generally of lower intensity than attacks specified in the Selected Attack Options. Limited Nuclear Options may be developed during the normal planning process in anticipation of crisis situations, during the course of crises and during hostilities. The procedures for developing Limited Nuclear Options may also be useful in developing specific modifications of Major or Selected Attack Options that are requested by the National Command Authorities.

Limited Nuclear Options should serve three principal objectives:

(1) To indicate to the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China that issues attendant to local conflicts are part of the vital interests of the United States.

(2) To provide options for establishing or increasing the military superiority of U.S. and allied forces in a local conflict and to inhibit further enemy military operations.

(3) To provide responses to limited nuclear attacks by the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China on the United States, its allies, or its forces.

b. Regional Nuclear Options

The use of nuclear-capable theater forces in preplanned or preplannable attacks on fixed targets is covered by the guidance for Major, Selected, and Limited Nuclear Options. However, circumstances might arise in which the interests of the United States can best be served by responding directly against attacking enemy forces with forces and resources immediately available within a theater of operations and clearly committed to the tactical defense of that area.

Such options are designated Regional Nuclear Options. The objective is to counter deployed enemy military forces engaged in

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aggressive actions and to create a state of affairs permitting the continuation or resumption of political arrangements to terminate the conflict. Plans developed for the defense of a specific geographic region or area should, as appropriate, include Regional Nuclear Options to provide selective, coordinated nuclear strikes on deployed enemy combat and service units, reserves, reinforcements, tactical nuclear delivery systems, local controls and field logistics facilities.

Every reasonable effort will be made to limit attacks in the vicinity of densely populated areas. Further, damage to non-military targets and friendly military forces will be minimized through selection of the lowest weapon yields necessary, delivery vehicles with suitable accuracies, and alternative targets to accomplish the desired objective.

7. Responsibilities and Review

Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Joint Chiefs of Staff will be responsible for:

- (1) Transmitting this policy guidance together with necessary implementing guidance to appropriate Unified and Specified Commands.
- (2) Directing and monitoring nuclear employment planning and evaluating the resultant operational plans and their impact on related and ancillary activities, especially crisis management activities.
- (3) Advising the President and the Secretary of Defense, as required, of actions taken and their overall evaluation of the effectiveness, utility, limitations and risks of the resultant operational plans.

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ANNEX A

Planning Guidance

- A-1 Objectives and Guidelines for Major Attack Options
- A-2 Objectives and Guidelines for Selected Attack Options
- A-3 Guidelines for Targeting and Damage Criteria
- A-4 Guidelines for Prohibited Target Categories and Optional Withholds

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A-1 Objectives and Guidelines for Major Attack Options

Note: Overall guidance for Major Attack Options is given in the basic document. The degree to which each set of objectives given below can be accomplished will be constrained by conformance to the guidelines for weapon allocation given in Section 5b. Representative Target Categories are intended to amplify the stated objective. The Prohibited Target Categories serve to prohibit certain targets from being included in attack options. The Optional Withholds provide for a choice, at the time of execution, with respect to certain targets or types of over-flight. Definitions of the target categories listed as Prohibited Target Categories and Optional Withholds are given in Section A-4 below.

M1. Objective: As specified in the basic document, Sections 5a(3) and 5a(4) with respect to the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies.

Representative Target Categories: A comprehensive military target system in the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies to include a) nuclear and conventional threats to the United States and its allies world-wide, and b) the national and intermediate military controls over these forces.

Prohibited Target Categories: None

Optional Withholds: Urban, Country, National Government, and National Military Control.

M2. Objectives: As specified in the basic document, Sections 5a(1), 5a(2), 5a(3) and 5a(4) with respect to the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies.

Representative Target Categories: All target categories in M1. above, plus the urban, industrial, political, economic and military resources in the Soviet Union necessary to post-war recovery as defined in Section A-3, below.

Prohibited Target Categories: None

Optional Withholds: Country

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M3. Objectives: As specified in the basic document, Sections 5a(3) and 5a(4) with respect to the People's Republic of China and its Asian allies.

Representative Target Categories: A comprehensive military target system in the People's Republic of China and its Asian allies to include a) nuclear and conventional threats to the United States and its allies world-wide and b) the national and intermediate military controls over these forces.

Prohibited Target Categories: None

Optional Withholds: Country, Urban, National Government, National Military Control and Soviet Union overflight.

M4. Objectives: As specified in the basic document, Sections 5a(1), 5a(2), 5a(3) and 5a(4) with respect to the People's Republic of China and its Asian allies.

Representative Target Categories: All target categories in M3. above plus the urban, industrial, political, economic and military resources in the People's Republic of China necessary to post-war recovery as defined in Section A-3 below.

Prohibited Target Categories: None

Optional Withholds: Country and Soviet Union overflight.

#### A-2 Objectives and Guidelines for Selected Attack Options

Note: Overall guidance for Selected Attack Options is given in the basic document. The degree to which each set of objectives given below can be accomplished will be constrained by conformance to the guidelines for weapon allocation to target categories given in Section 5b. Representative Target Categories are intended to amplify the stated objective. The Prohibited Target Categories serve to prohibit certain targets from being included in attack options. The Optional Withholds provide for a choice, at the time of execution, with respect to certain targets or types of overflight. Definitions of the target categories listed as Prohibited Target Categories and Optional Withholds are given in Section A-4 below.

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- S1. Objective: Neutralize the Soviet nuclear threat to the United States.

Representative Target Categories: a) ICBM sites, b) homeport locations, submarine bases, and shipyard facilities for missile-launching submarines, c) active bomber home bases, related dispersal bases, and arctic staging bases, d) national and regional nuclear storage facilities, e) sensors and associated communications that would allow the Soviet leaders to execute a timely launch of their strategic nuclear forces, f) Soviet national civilian and military controls including alternate command centers, regional military headquarters and control over nuclear delivery forces, but which are not collocated with these forces.

Prohibited Target Categories: Urban

Optional Withholds: Country, National Government, National Military Control, Attack Assessment.

- S2. Objective: Neutralize the Soviet nuclear threat to major urban areas of members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) other than the United States and Canada.

Representative Target Categories: a) IRBM and MRBM sites, b) SS-11 sites located in IR/MRBM fields, c) SLBM homeports, d) bomber home, dispersal and logistics bases, e) supporting national and regional nuclear storage facilities, f) Soviet national civilian and military controls including alternate command centers, regional military headquarters and control over nuclear delivery forces, but which are not collocated with those forces, and g) sensors and associated communications that would allow the Soviet leaders to execute a timely launch of their strategic nuclear forces.

Prohibited Target Categories: Urban

Optional Withholds: Country, National Government, National Military Control, Attack Assessment.

- S3. Objectives: Neutralize the nuclear and conventional aircraft threat to NATO other than the United States and Canada.

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Representative Target Categories: Aircraft home, dispersal, and logistic bases together with associated support facilities and nuclear storage sites.

Prohibited Target Categories: Urban, National Government, National Military Controls, Attack Assessment.

Optional Withholds: Country (particularly the Soviet Union)

- S4. Objective: Neutralize the ground-based military threats to NATO.

Representative Target Categories: a) military controls and major military headquarters, b) transportation and other logistics facilities, c) major fixed ground force installations, d) and other military targets critical to the overall conduct and direction of conventional military operations.

Prohibited Target Categories: Urban, National Government, National Military Control, Attack Assessment.

Optional Withholds: Country (particularly the Soviet Union)

- S5. Objective: Neutralize the threat to NATO posed by the naval forces of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies.

Representative Target Categories: Homeports, bases, shipyards, and support facilities for missile launching submarines and other naval forces.

Prohibited Target Categories: National Government, National Military Control, Attack Assessment.

Optional Withholds: Urban, Country (particularly the Soviet Union)

- S6. Objective: Provide a nuclear defense of NATO, except the United States and Canada, without the use of U.S. CONUS-launched forces.

Representative Target Categories: A comprehensive military target system threatening NATO including nuclear missiles and associated storage sites, and target categories listed under S3, S4 and S5.

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Prohibited Target Categories: National Government, National Military Control, Attack Assessment.

Optional Withholds: Urban, Country.

57. Objective: Neutralize the Soviet nuclear threat to U.S. forces and U.S. allies in Asia.

Representative Target Categories: a) SLBM related facilities, b) SS-11s, c) SS-12s, d) MRBM/IRBMs, e) appropriate airfields f) tactical nuclear missiles, and g) associated support facilities and nuclear storage sites. (This threat is generally based east of 55 degrees east longitude.)

Prohibited Target Categories: Urban, National Government, National Military Control, Attack Assessment.

Optional Withholds: None

58. Objective: Neutralize the Soviet conventional threat to U.S. forces and U.S. allies in Asia.

Representative Target Categories: a) appropriate airfields, b) major ground force installations, and c) naval facilities. (This threat is generally located east of 55 degrees east longitude.)

Prohibited Target Categories: Urban, National Government, National Military Control, Attack Assessment.

Optional Withholds: None

59. Objective: Neutralize the operational nuclear threat of the People's Republic of China to the United States, U.S. forces and allies in Asia and the means necessary for rebuilding this threat, separately or combined.

Representative Target Categories: a) submarine related facilities; b) bomber bases, c) land-based ballistic missiles, d) nuclear production and storage facilities and e) research, development and testing facilities for aircraft, missiles, nuclear weapons, and chemical, biological, and radiological warfare.

Prohibited Target Categories: National Government, National Military Control, Attack Assessment.

Optional Withholds: Urban, Soviet Union overflight.



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S10. Objective: Neutralize the national, civilian, and military controls of the People's Republic of China.

Representative Target Categories: a) national command centers, alternates thereto, regional military headquarters, and control centers, and communications facilities related to control over nuclear delivery forces, but which are not collocated with these forces, and b) sensors and associated communication that allow the People's Republic of China leaders to discern the nature of nuclear attacks on the People's Republic of China and its allies.

Prohibited Target Categories: None.

Optional Withholds: Urban, Attack Assessment, Soviet Union overflight.

S11. Objective: Neutralize the conventional threat from the People's Republic of China and its allies to U.S. forces and allies in Asia.

Representative Target Categories: a) port facilities, b) major ground force installations, and c) airfields.

Prohibited Target Categories: National Government, National Military Control, Attack Assessment.

Optional Withholds: Urban, Soviet Union overflight.

A-3 Targeting and Damage Criteria

The following general guidance applies when programming forces:

a. Relative Target Importance

Available forces will be programmed to permit attainment of damage expectancies consistent with target importance in achieving the attack objectives of this policy guidance. (Damage expectancy (DE) as used above is defined as the average damage that would be achieved if the attack were repeated many times.) When programming weapons which contribute only a small, relative, incremental increase in damage expectancy, the application should be examined from the standpoint of possible alternative application to other targets with a view toward achieving more compensatory returns for the programmed effort.

b. Measures to Increase Confidence

Measures should be employed to increase confidence in our estimates of attack results, e.g., cross targeting; however, in cases where such measures might conflict with other considerations, e.g., trans-attack stability, measures chosen shall minimize such conflicts.

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c. Overall Damage Expectancy

The overall damage expectancy to any Designated Ground Zero (DGZ) in an attack option resulting from weapons programmed for delivery by U.S. and allied forces, where appropriate, should not normally exceed 90 percent. The determination of damage expectancy on each DGZ will include collateral damage effects from weapons programmed on proximate DGZs within the same attack option. In addition, fatalities due to fallout will be included where appropriate, e.g., Limited Nuclear Options. The programming of theater forces against DGZs programmed for attack by other U.S. forces will not be precluded by the 90 percent restriction, if such additional effort is required to reduce time of attack or cover targets critical to theater commanders. The cumulative damage expectancy to a DGZ resulting from forces programmed in a Limited Nuclear Option, or to a DGZ in a defense suppression attack, may exceed 90 percent.

d. Nuclear Threat Target Coverage

In a U.S. attack planned with fully generated undamaged forces on the Soviet nuclear threat to the United States and its allies, not less than one warhead should be applied to each ICBM site, each IRBM and MRBM site, each base for heavy, medium, and light bombers, and each base for missile-launching submarines, even if a high damage expectancy cannot be achieved or only short-term damage can be realized.

e. Urban, Industrial, Political and Economic Base

A very important purpose of attacks on urban, industrial, political and economic base of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, as described in the basic document, is to minimize the strategic power and influence of these countries in the post-war era and to prolong their post-war recovery. To this end targeting will meet at least the following four criteria: (1) inflict moderate damage on facilities comprising approximately 70% of each nation's war-supporting economic base, (2) program at least one weapon on an industrial facility in the top 250 urban areas in the Soviet Union and in the top 125 urban areas in the People's Republic of China (ranked by economic worth), (3) program at least one weapon on major centers of government, and (4) neutralize other targets, including military targets, critical to post-attack recovery not covered above.

It is not the intent of this guidance to target civilian population per se. Accordingly, targeting to meet the above criteria will not include residential structures as objective targets. It is recognized, however, that substantial damage to residential structures and population may result from targeting that meets the above criteria.

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A-4. Prohibited Target Categories and Optional Withholds

The objectives and guidelines for the development of attack options contain references to Prohibited Target Categories and Optional Withholds. The names and definitions of the Prohibited Target Categories and Optional Withholds used in Major and Selected Attack Options are given below. The objectives and guidelines for Limited Nuclear Options and Regional Nuclear Options may contain additional Prohibited Target Categories and Optional Withholds.

(1) Urban. To prohibit or withhold attacks on targets that are in or collocated with major urban areas of 100,000 or more population. A target is defined to be collocated with a major urban area if attacking the target alone or in combination with other targets would result in moderate damage to 10 percent or more of the residential floor space. Deviations from this guideline may be made in exceptional cases if necessary to avoid major degradation in accomplishing the political/military objectives.

(2) Country. To prohibit or withhold attack on targets in any country.

(3) National Government. To prohibit or withhold attack on the centers of government within the urban areas of Moscow and/or Peking.

(4) National Military Control. To prohibit or withhold attack on targets composing the national level military controls of the Soviet Union and/or the People's Republic of China including communications facilities.

(5) Attack Assessment. To prohibit or withhold attack on sensors and associated communications used by the Soviet or People's Republic of China national leadership to assess the nature of nuclear attacks against their own countries or forces.

(6) Soviet Union Overflight. To withhold those sorties that overfly the Soviet Union in attacks on the People's Republic of China and its allies.