OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Memo For _Bill_

Note I sent to
Rand on Building
Block proposal.

Dave Chu

Andy – info – JR
ive sent d... to Lando:

Mike:

I've been carrying around these notes since last Friday and have decided to send them off to you so that Bruce and Bill can consider them rather than wait until I can put together a full letter.

First, its clear what we don't need in a study of building blocks, in my opinion. And that's a catalog of 68 different cuts at the target base, showing for each group of categories the percent damage (ordinate) as weapons or EMT increase (abscissa) together with collateral population damage or byproduct damage to some other categories. I know that's not what's proposed, but its too easy to fall into that after the attempts at hard thinking stall. And its the hard thinking we do need.

The building block notion arose again in 1977 because we need flexibility in choosing and executing nuclear attacks, and 2) we need some confidence that we've developed an appropriate set of targeting options before the event that offer some hope of going together to meet the actual needs in the event. Even with all the talk about rapid planning, etc., organizations just don't do anything very well that they haven't rehearsed a few times. The ultimate option selections will almost certainly be combinations of options that are on the books.

There is a constraint on the number of executable options you can keep on the books. That hasn't been written about in any way that informs this business of building blocks. That number depends in some mysterious way on execution message formats and the distinction between them, on how many options the President can really be expected to understand and to be familiar with, on the number of separate target sets that can be stored in the different forces, on the number of target folders that can be prepared with bomber crews trained to understand the peculiar target information, on the actual SSBN patrol areas and the footprint limitations that each area imposes on what a particular SSBN can do, and probably on some other factors. Now that's not a particularly interesting aspect, but its a blank.

While Rand in 1977-78 raised (for Sloss) the notion of building blocks as cuts of the target base, JSTPS went forward with the notion that building blocks should in themselves be executable options that made some sense -- i.e. something like the original notion of SAOs or LNOs. While the organizations have talked past each other at the meetings I'm aware of, there has been no real discussion of why one way of approaching building blocks rather than the other makes sense. There's been sort of an attitude of "lets calculate the DE in various ways and see what happens." What are the criteria and the considerations that we should be using when we think about creating building blocks? Is each building block supposed to be separately executable? Or do they only make sense

when you put them together in some fashion? Should each building
block have a plausible scenario? If not, why is it a separate building
block? Are there scenarios that clearly lead you to want certain attack
options that are composed of separate building blocks, but for some
variations of those scenarios, you don't want to attack some of the
building blocks?

Perhaps the next set of thoughts is relevant to both Bill Jones'
project as well as Bruce's. What are the measures by which we should
evaluate building blocks? For example: 1) The efficiency costs in terms
of the weapon or damage overlaps if separate building blocks are executed
together. This of course comes about because of the overlap of the
weapon effects. 2) Considering such efficiency questions, should the
building blocks be nested for greater efficiency? 3) What are the risks
that the President incurs if he executes one or a number of building
blocks, and then is unable (perhaps because of destruction of the C^3·
system) to execute any further nuclear attacks? This suggests that we
would want to know some measure of damage undone or options at risk as
we examine each building block. More clearly, executing very large
building blocks, or large combinations of building blocks doesn't leave
as much at risk; 4) The collateral damage and byproduct damage do get
cranked in under these considerations 5) Soviet ability to assess each
building block if it were separately executed, both on the way in and
after it detonates? There are undoubtedly better measures than these,
but so far as I know, nobody has laid out the way we should evaluate the
building blocks as we create them (this is good for this but not that,
etc.) nor (for Bill Jones' project) has anyone said how we should
evaluate the adequacy of combinations of building blocks as we try to
put them together in meaningful options for the President. (e.g. Here's
an attack. Its composed of a number of our preplanned blocks. How well
does it meet the President's requirement? Well, what are the measures
by which we decide that?)

One additional thing that bothered me was the emphasis on escalation
control. While that's certainly been discussed as a major component of
U.S. strategy, its only one portion of the spectrum. If the building block
notion is viable, it has to be relevant to the upper end of the spectrum
also. What might be useful are 10-12 basic building blocks that would
probably be present in most major attack situations--perhaps something
like political control considerations, nuclear, conventional and power
projection forces and their controls, portions of the economy and its
controls, war supporting industry, and portions of the population and the
organizations that care for the population. These (sort of generic)
building blocks could be examined in terms of the kind of measures that I
discussed earlier so as to give us a more concrete idea of what the whole
concept might look like in practice, and so that JCS and JSTPS have
something more concrete to think about.

I think the proposal on "Dynamic Retargeting" points in the right direction. It would be useful to have some more scenarios of how nuclear conflict might go. We have some ideas for scenarios also, and it would probably be mutually profitable for us to talk together on that. Andy thought that he remembered there being some discussion of Rand thinking about how the conflict might actually be fought, perhaps differently than at present. He felt that that was missing from this proposal. In any event, I do think that the employment options that are prepared before the fact must hedge against the different strategies that the Soviets might choose once in conflict, just as Bill notes. Addressing how different building blocks, different concepts of conflict, and different ways of putting together previously configured options look against the different strategies would be a task worth undertaking. The proposal doesn't give much hint that anyone has really thought out how one would go about that very difficult set of problems.

I hope these very rough comments are of some use, and I look forward to talking with you when I visit the West Coast (probably after November 6th.)

Gene