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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

S/S

August 6, 1980

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TO : The Secretary
FROM: PM - Reginald Bartholomew

US Strategic Nuclear Targeting Policy

There are press reports that the President recently signed PD-59, a "new" strategic policy that gives greater emphasis to targeting Soviet military forces and political leadership. While we have not seen a copy of the PD, we believe that the press reports are essentially accurate.

What's New In Our Policy?

Despite all the fanfare, PD-59 does not represent a truly new policy. It instead formalizes the evolution in strategic thinking that has taken place over the last six years both in and out of government. Then-Defense Secretary Schlesinger called for such a strategy in 1974 and used it as his rationale for the Mark-12A warhead/NS-20 guidance system changes to Minuteman III. Harold Brown's Annual Reports to Congress for the last two years have talked about a "countervailing strategy" involving counterforce targeting. Last year's MX decision was accompanied by official rhetoric on the need to be able to target Soviet forces and political leadership. Indeed, we have always included Soviet military targets in our plans.

The Origins of PD-59

PD-59 is the culmination of a series of Administration steps that began in 1977 with its basic military policy review (PRM-10). A subsequent DOD year-long study concluded that the Soviet leadership may be more deterred by a doctrine which stressed the ability and

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- 2 -

readiness to attack military and leadership targets, perhaps on a limited scale, than a doctrine that gave predominant emphasis to our ability to destroy Soviet cities and economy. This report and associated papers were the basis for a series of DOD-chaired PRCs last year on nuclear targeting policy, in which State and ACDA participated.

The MX decision, which followed on the heels of those PRCs, signaled US determination to acquire a prompt hard-target kill capability that would threaten Soviet strategic forces and previewed the strategic emphasis in PD-59.

Potential Criticism of PD-59

The PD was actually less controversial and dramatic than the press reports. We can expect to be criticized on PD-59 by some in this country who will say that by making nuclear war more palatable (attacking military forces rather than cities) we also make it more likely, and that deterrence will be weakened by the reduced emphasis on complete devastation of the USSR. We also may be accused of reducing the stability of the strategic balance by explicitly threatening Soviet strategic forces.

We will respond that being able to launch a devastating general attack is still the centerpiece of our deterrence policy and we will retain this capability; but we should have more flexibility in our targeting. We can also highlight Harold's belief that no nuclear war would stay limited for very long.

Abroad, we can expect criticism from some Europeans and the obligatory blast from Moscow. Although the Soviets have never been comfortable with our "city-killing" philosophy, they will probably read the press coverage of PD-59 as a rationalization for MX. More important, they might see it as a US attempt to regain a first strike capability and at least some of the political leverage we formerly derived from strategic superiority.

We have kept our Allies informed in a general way about our targeting approach through the Nuclear Planning Group, which Harold briefed in Norway in June. Were it not for the press stories, which blew this out

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of proportion, we would probably hear nothing from the Allies. As it is, they may complain about our failure to consult before announcing the PD.

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