

Air Force Policy Letter for Commanders

From the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force



Washington, D.C. 1 May 1982

...WE MUST HAVE A DETERRENT. Our goal is peace. And to have peace, we must have a deterrent that would prevent someone from adventuring aggressively in the world, using nuclear weapons. -- President Ronald Reagan, 5 April 1982

A MAJOR U.S. POLICY STATEMENT ON PEACE AND DETERRENCE was made by Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. in an address to Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington on 6 April. Excerpts:

"No one has ever advocated nuclear war. No responsible voice has ever sought to minimize its horrors. On the contrary, from the earliest days of the post-war era, America's leaders have recognized the only nuclear strategy consistent with our values and our survival -- our physical existence, and what makes life worth living -- is the strategy of deterrence. The massive destructive power of these weapons precludes their serving any lesser purpose. The catastrophic consequences of another World War -- with or without nuclear weapons -- make deterrence of conflict our highest objective, and our only rational military strategy in the modern age. . . .

"Those in the West who advocate the adoption of a 'no-first-use' policy seldom go on to propose that the United States reintroduce the draft, triple the size of its armed forces and put its economy on wartime footing. Yet in the absence of such steps, a pledge of 'no-first-use' effectively leaves the West nothing with which to counterbalance the Soviet conventional advantages and geopolitical position in Europe. . . .

"Another concept which has recently attracted interest is that of a freeze on nuclear weapons. While being sensitive to the concerns underlying this proposal, we have had to underscore the flaws in such an approach. A freeze at current levels would perpetuate an unstable and unequal military balance. It would reward a decade of unilateral Soviet buildup, and penalize the United States for a decade of unilateral restraint. . . .

"Much of the argumentation for a nuclear freeze revolves around the question of how much is enough. Each side possesses thousands of deliverable nuclear weapons. Does it then really make any difference who is ahead? The question itself is misleading, as it assumes that deterrence is simply a matter of numbers of weapons, or numbers of casualties which could be inflicted. It is not. . . . Deterrence depends upon our capability, even after suffering a massive nuclear blow, to prevent an aggressor from securing a military advantage, and prevailing in a conflict. Only if we maintain such a capability can we deter such a blow. Deterrence, in consequence, rests upon a military balance measured not in warhead numbers, but in a complex interaction of capabilities and vulnerabilities. . . .

The vital role which conventional forces play in deterrence is too often neglected, particularly by those most vocal in their concern over reliance upon nuclear weapons. A strengthened conventional posture both strengthens the deterrent effect of nuclear forces, and reduces the prospect of their ever being used. . . .

"The control and reduction of nuclear weapons, based on deterrence, is the only effective intellectual, political and moral response to nuclear weapons. The stakes are too great and the consequences of error too catastrophic to exchange deterrence for a leap into the unknown. The incentives for real arms control exist and we have both the means and the duty to apply them. . . .

"Let us be clear about our objectives in the nuclear era. We seek to reduce the risk of war and to establish a stable military balance at lower levels of risk and effort. By doing so today, we may be able to build a sense of mutual confidence and cooperation, offering the basis for even more ambitious steps tomorrow. But above all, we shall be pursuing the 'highest possibility' for peace."

INSIGHT

NATO's Nuclear Forces

(Extracted from the remarks of Gen. Lew Allen Jr., Air Force Chief of Staff, on 31 March before the Royal United Services Institute in London.)

The United States has the principal responsibility for providing the Alliance's nuclear deterrent, though the British and French nuclear systems enhance NATO's capabilities and contribute to the credibility of the Alliance's deterrent posture.

The strengthening of the Alliance's nuclear forces has been made imperative by the steady expansion of Soviet theater and strategic nuclear capabilities. Since the mid-1970s the Soviet Union has deployed more than 750 fourth-generation ICBMs armed with about 5,000 highly accurate multiple warheads. A similar expansion of Soviet submarine-launched missile forces has taken place. And, the Russians have deployed some 300 intermediate-range SS-20s, each armed with three nuclear warheads, the vast majority of which are deployed within striking range of western Europe.

As a result of these developments, the clear-cut Western nuclear superiority of the first two decades of NATO's existence is a thing of the past. NATO can no longer, if it ever could, rely on nuclear capabilities as a substitute for adequate conventional strength. We must proceed with a broad program to strengthen both theater and strategic nuclear forces. We must restore an adequate balance between Alliance and Soviet nuclear forces across the full spectrum of nuclear capabilities and must maintain nuclear forces of sufficient capability to deny the Soviet Union any prospect of gain from nuclear conflict.

It is essential for NATO to possess a flexible nuclear retaliatory capability to make it abundantly clear to the Soviets that they cannot gain military or political leverage on the Alliance by nuclear means. U.S. central strategic systems continue to be inextricably linked to the defense of Europe. Nevertheless, in light of the buildup of Soviet longer-range theater nuclear forces directed toward Western Europe, either these forces must be reduced substantially via negotiations or NATO's intermediate-range nuclear forces must be strengthened. NATO forces must be able to counterbalance the buildup of SS-20s and Backfire bombers and place at risk Warsaw Pact forces and assets deep in Eastern Europe and the western military districts of the U.S.S.R.

NATO's program to deploy ground-launched cruise missiles and Pershing II ballistic missiles in the United Kingdom and on the European continent is designed to fulfill these objectives. These deployments will go some way toward remedying the present marked disparity between NATO and Warsaw Pact theater nuclear capabilities. They will reinforce the Alliance's structure of collective security and will strengthen the linkage to American strategic forces. Modernization of the Alliance's intermediate-range forces also provides a firm foundation for the negotiation of equitable nuclear arms reductions with the U.S.S.R.

Though not without difficulties, the ground-launched cruise missile program, for which the U.S. Air Force has primary responsibility, is proceeding well toward the planned December 1983 initial operational capability at Greenham Common.

It is clear that there is widespread sentiment in Europe and the United States for the containment and reversal of the nuclear arms race. The Reagan Administration fully shares this objective. The United States seeks to negotiate equitable, verifiable arms reduction agreements with the Soviet Union for both intermediate- and intercontinental-range nuclear systems.

Recent history indicates that the negotiation of such agreements will not prove easy. Nevertheless, we have already embarked upon such talks in Geneva with regard to intermediate-range nuclear forces and anticipate the commencement of negotiations on the reduction of strategic arms sometime this summer. Yet, as we seek these limitations, we must continue to move forward with our collective efforts to modernize our nuclear forces, both to protect our security in the face of continuing Soviet improvements and as a means to provide the Kremlin with an incentive to negotiate seriously toward substantial reductions.

BRIEFS ON MATTERS AFFECTING THE AIR FORCE

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger was asked recently by a WRC-TV interviewer in Washington, D.C., whether the Soviets have superiority in nuclear strength. He replied: "Yes, I think we have to look at the total capability. A lot of people just count warheads, or, as they say, 'count beans,' and things like that. But what we have to look at is accuracy, the ability to destroy hardened targets and things of that kind, rather than simply counting specific warheads. And in these terrible equations that we have to work with, the Soviets have, over the years -- because they have out-invested us heavily year after year for 21 years -- have built up advantages in certain types of weapons and certain types of capabilities. And that's why a freeze would be a very dangerous thing for the United States to get into now. . . . Now we can start negotiations. And if the Soviets are willing to do so, we can make substantial reductions on both sides that can produce that strategic deterrent balance at far lower levels. But to freeze now would freeze into the existing situation the momentum and the degree of advantage that the Soviets have managed to build up over the years."

The people of all Services who operate Armed Forces C3, Command, Control and Communications, says Lt. Gen. William J. Hillman (USA), are top-notch. After a worldwide visit to C3 units he said that military leaders should: "(1) Get the newer equipment into the hands of our people as fast as we can. (2) Take care of our NCOs and Chiefs -- support them in their careers, their training programs, and their family concerns. (3) Trust our young officers with responsibility -- they will deliver. (4) Think about our people in the field first, when we make decisions on programs. (5) Push for recognition of these unsung heroes all over the world."

It's increasingly important to modernize the Air Reserve Forces, because of their great contribution to the total Air Force, said Under Secretary of the Air Force Edward C. Aldridge, Jr. in a speech at Texas A&M. He added: "I don't believe any one of our national leaders underestimates the value of that contribution. The Air National Guard alone provides about 30% of our total force structure, but costs only about 3% of the annual budget. These units have the most experience and the best maintenance records in the Air Force; we are trying to make sure they now have top-line equipment, not just hand-me-downs. We will encourage and be receptive to suggestions for new missions for our Guard and Reserve units."

The Air Force Office of the Surgeon General held the first of 13 regional "family violence workshops" from 22-26 Mar at Andrews AFB, MD. The workshops focus on child advocacy and family counseling services to deal with problems of child and spouse abuse. They provide a way to exchange information among Air Force lawyers, chaplains, social actions personnel, security police and other professionals who routinely deal with these kinds of cases.

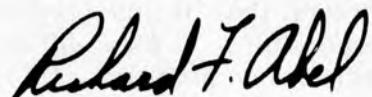
One purpose of the Air Force Project Warrior program is to encourage more reading of military history. In an article in Parameters, the Army War College Journal (March 82) Jay Luvaas writes on "Military History: Is It Still Practicable?" He quotes B.H. Liddell Hart's observation that "history is a catalogue of mistakes. It is our duty to profit by them." He says Grant's Memoirs ought to be required reading for all officers. He quotes Napoleon: "Tactics, the evolutions, the science of the engineer and the artillerist can be learned in treatises much like geometry, but the knowledge of the higher spheres of war is only acquired through the study of the wars and battles of the Great Captains and by experience. It has no precise, fixed rules. Everything depends on the character that nature has given to the general, on his qualities, on his faults, on the nature of the troops, on the range of weapons, on the season and on a thousand circumstances which are never the same."

Secretary of the Air Force Verne Orr says: "It is important for us all to understand that United States operations in space are an integral part of our military capabilities. Our current satellites provide essential surveillance and weather information and serve as a critical element of our command, control and communications systems. Looking to the future and the capabilities offered by the Space Transportation System, operational planning for Air Force use

of the Shuttle includes eventual transition of virtually all national security spacecraft from their current, expendable launch vehicles to the Shuttle."

The Air Staff recently formed a Directorate of Space within the organization of the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff Operations, Plans, and Readiness. In Los Angeles, the Air Force has an Air Force Space Division for development and acquisition of space systems and has named a Deputy Commander for space operations for launching Air Force space systems and acting as an interface with NASA on Shuttle operations. The Defense Space Operations Committee, chaired by the Secretary of the Air Force, coordinates space operations activities for the entire Defense Department.

Beginning next month, news in the Air Force's new monthly Take-Home News clipsheet will reach Air Force families through some 170 Air Force newspapers and their more than 1,600,000 readers. Many Air Force newspaper editors will cut articles out of the 17-inch by 22-inch clipsheet and use them in various issues of their newspapers throughout the month. Some commanders may choose to have the entire Take-Home News reproduced each month. This could be used as an insert in the base newspaper, posted on bulletin boards or made available to families at distribution points in commissaries, base exchanges and housing areas.



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