

U.S. Nuclear Strategy After the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review

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Intensions to Change

“To put an end to Cold War thinking, we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, and urge others to do the same.”

President Barack Obama, Prague, 2009 (emphasis added)

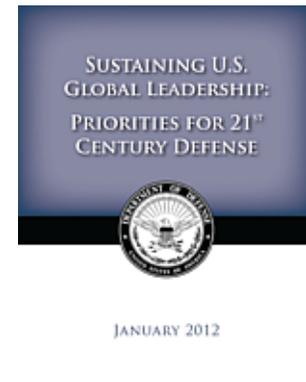


In “making preparations for the next round of nuclear reductions” the president has asked DOD “to review strategic requirements and develop options for further reductions in our current nuclear stockpile” and “potential changes in targeting requirements and alert postures....”

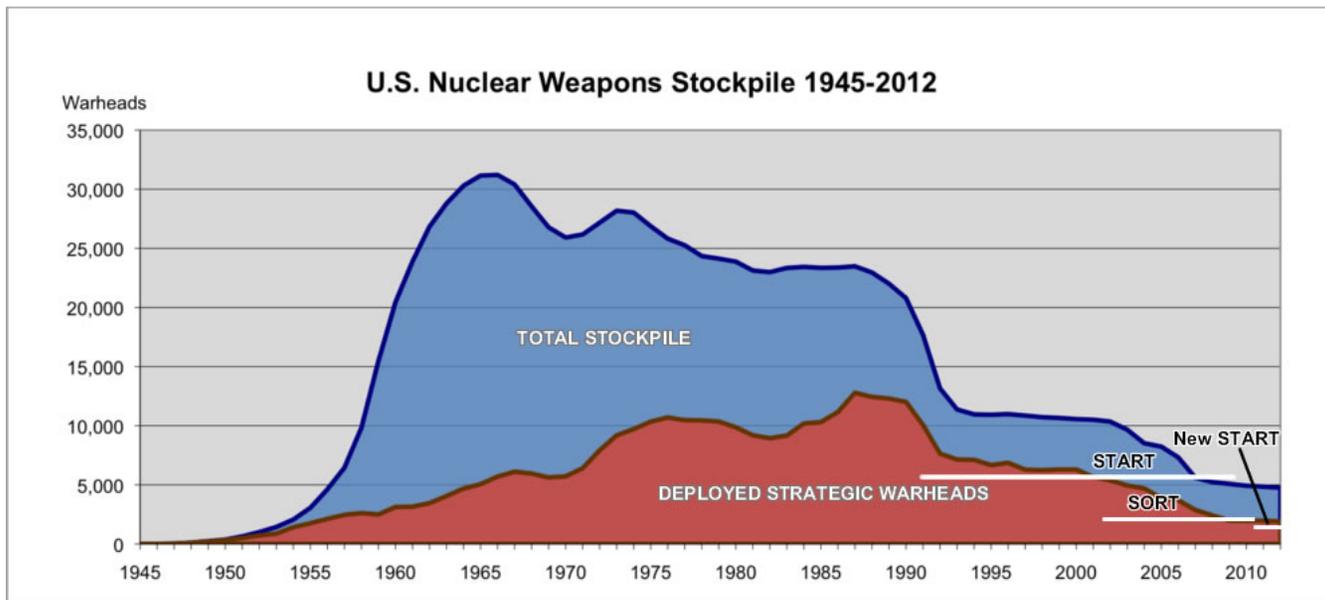
Thomas Donilon, National Security Advisor, March 2011 (emphasis added)

“*It is possible that our deterrence goals can be achieved with a smaller nuclear force*, which would reduce the number of nuclear weapons in our inventory as well as their role in U.S. national security strategy.”

Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense, DOD, 2012 (emphasis in original)

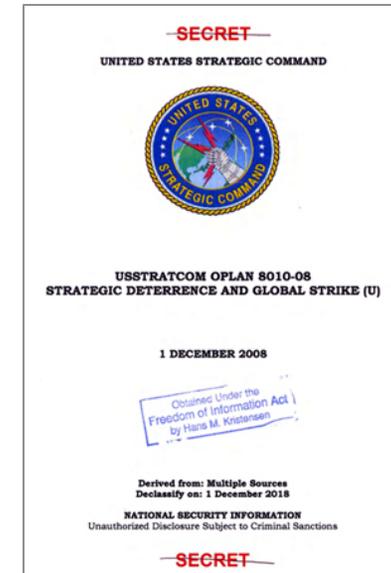
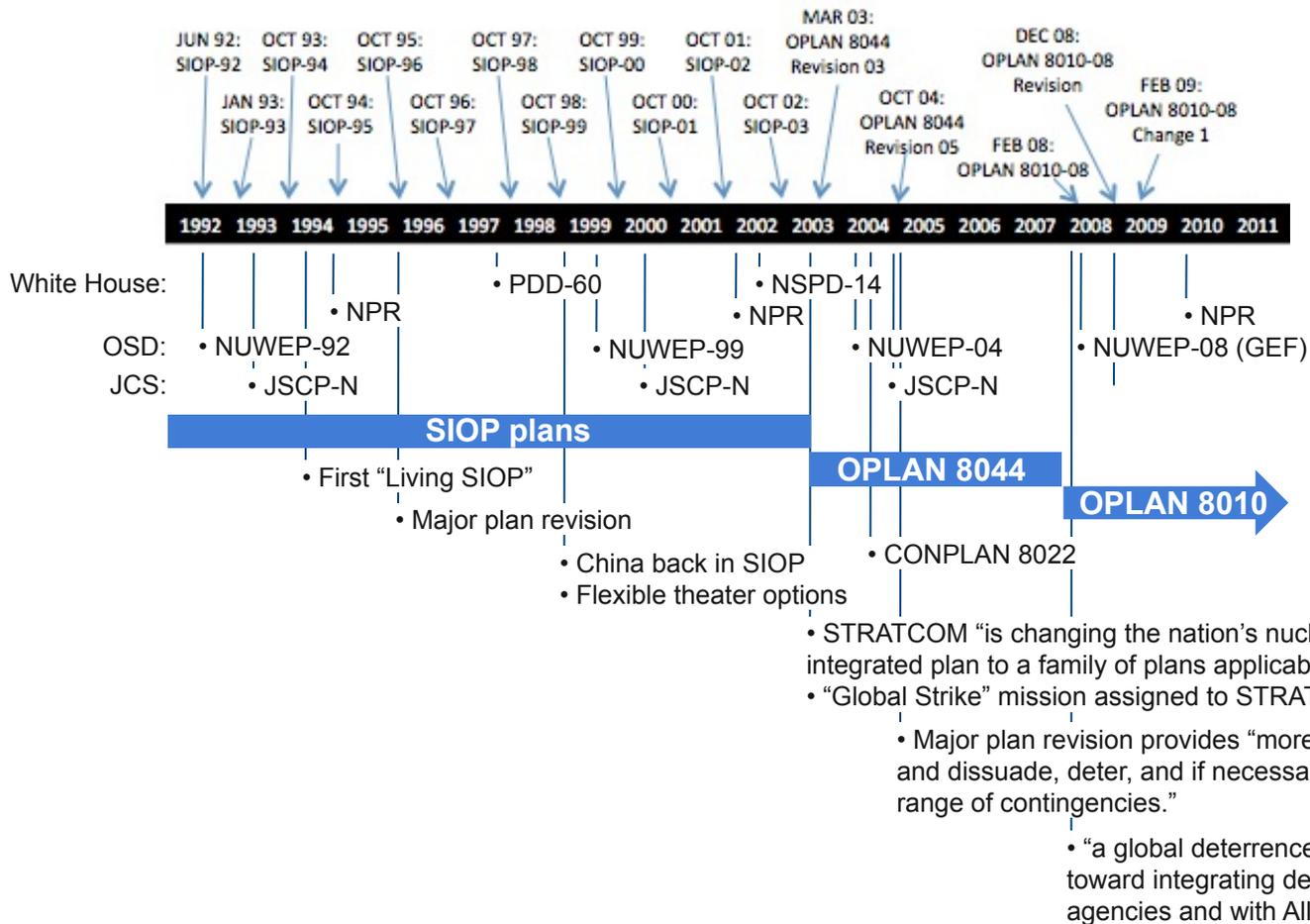


Where Are We?



- Significant reductions in stockpile and deployed warheads compared with Cold War
- Stockpile reduction since peak in 1965 and 1974
- Deployed strategic warheads peaked in 1987
- Stockpile just below 5,000 with about 1,900 strategic and 200 tactical deployed

Recent Nuclear War Plan History



Wider Strategic Threat Horizon

PLANNING FOR REGIONAL STATES TOP SECRET

- Series of options North Korean Taepo Dong 1
- Scenario driven approach Libyan Tarhuna Facility
- Planning Assumption: Scud Missile (Iran, Iraq, Libya)

TOP SECRET

- Proliferation concern and 9/11 attacks triggered broadening of not only conventional but also nuclear planning to “regional states” armed with WMD
- Terminology changed from deterring “nuclear” adversaries to deterring “WMD” adversaries
- OPLAN 8044 Revision 03 included executable strike options against regional proliferators
- Based on NSPD-14 (2002)
- Effect: mission proliferation (do more with less); plan more complex

Source: STRATCOM OPLAN 8044 Revision 03 briefing slide obtained by FAS under FOIA

Smaller But Wider War Plan

SECRET

OPLAN 8010 Background

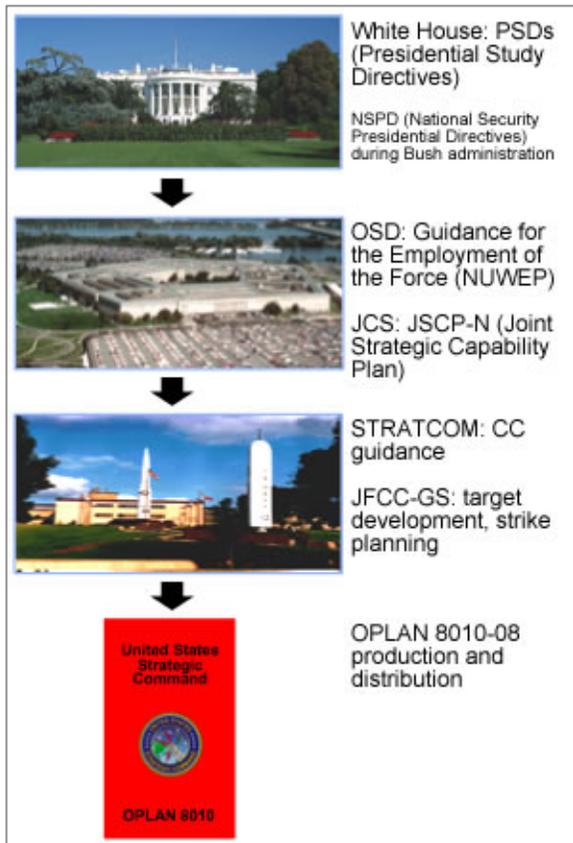
- OPLAN 8010 base plan approved Dec 07, including:
 - [REDACTED] (b)(1)
 - Nuclear force employment plans

- Status of Adversary Appendices:
 - [REDACTED] Next review forecasted [REDACTED] (b)(5)
 - [REDACTED] Assumptions and concept approved [REDACTED] (b)(5)
 - [REDACTED] Final review/approval scheduled [REDACTED] (b)(5)
 - [REDACTED] Approval of assumptions and concept scheduled [REDACTED] (b)(5)
 - [REDACTED] Approval of assumptions and concept forecasted [REDACTED] (b)(5)
 - [REDACTED] Mission analysis in progress
 - [REDACTED] Mission analysis in progress

Source: STRATCOM OPLAN 8010 briefing slide obtained by FAS under FOIA

- OPLAN 8010-08 Change 1 (Feb 2009): Strategic Deterrence and Global Strike
- Directed against six adversaries. Probably Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, Syria and 9/11-type WMD scenario
- Half do not have nuclear weapons and four of them are NPT members
- Includes four types of nuclear attack options:
 - Basic Attack Options (BAOs)
 - Selective Attack Options (SAOs)
 - Emergency Response Options (EROs)
 - Directed/Adaptive Planning Capability Options
- There are no longer Major Attack Options (MAOs) in the strategic war plan

Nuclear War Plan Guidance



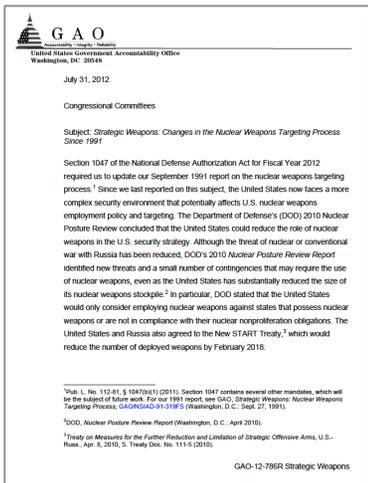
- Presidential guidance is but first step in long process
- April 2004: NUWEP-04 stated in part: “U.S. nuclear forces must be capable of, and be seen to be capable of, destroying those critical war-making and war-supporting assets and capabilities that a potential enemy leadership values most and that it would rely on to achieve its own objectives in a post-war world.”
- May 2008: NUWEP-08 Annex to Guidance for the Employment of the Force (GEF), which combines half a dozen previously separate guidance documents into one document
- 2011-2012: Obama administration nuclear targeting review; finished but don’t expect anything until after election

“[The] president’s direction to me was less than two pages; the Joint Staff’s explanation of what the president really meant to say was twenty-six pages.”

STRATCOM Commander Admiral James Ellis, June 18, 2004

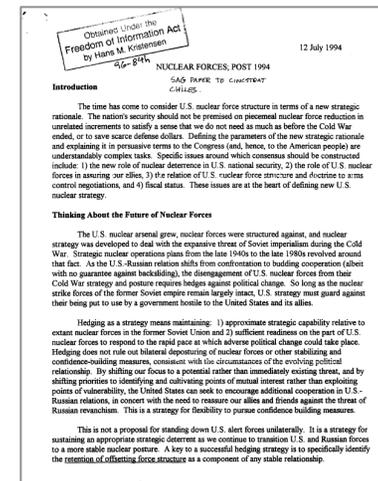


Nuclear War Plan Guidance



- GAO, 2012: Although “the structure of the nuclear war plan, and the categories and number of targets in the plan, have changed,” the “fundamental objectives of U.S. nuclear deterrence policy have remained largely consistent since 1991, even as the threat environment and the size of the nuclear weapons stockpile have changed. The current process for developing nuclear targeting and employment guidance has remained consistent.”

- Strategic Advisory Group to Commander of STRATCOM, 1994: “the core of U.S. targeting policy” is “to threaten that which the Russian leadership values most and to limit damage to the extent possible should deterrence fail.”
- Damage limitation requirement is key to requirement to keep 900 warheads on alert



Nuclear War Plan Targets

- Although significant adjustments have been made, the basic target categories haven't changed that much:

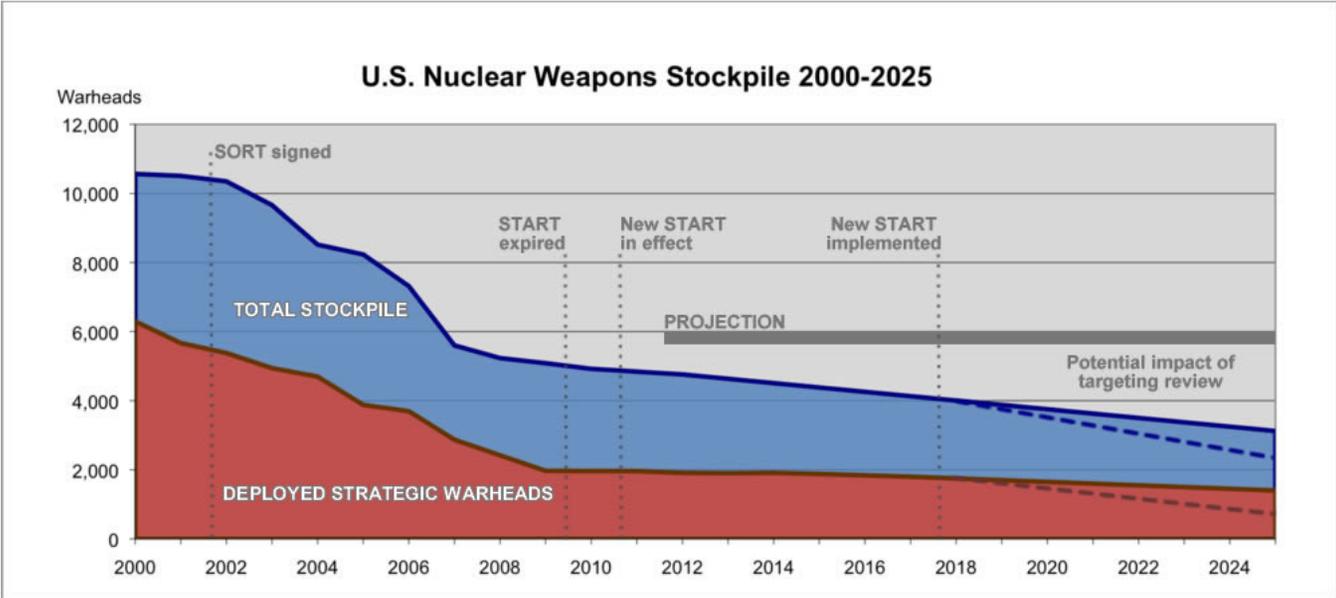
SIOP-5 (1976)

Nuclear forces and storage locations
Conventional forces
Leadership and command and control
Economic and industrial facilities

OPLAN 8010 (2009)

Military forces
WMD infrastructure
Military and national leadership
War supporting infrastructure

Reducing Numbers



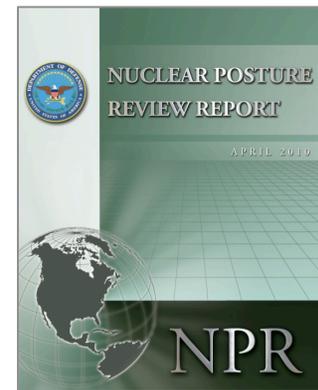
- W Bush administration cut stockpile nearly in half by 2007
- Modest but consistent reductions since
- New START limit nearly achieved for warheads; not yet for delivery vehicles
- Additional unilateral reductions to 3,000-3,500 warheads by mid-2020s expected

Reducing Role

Administration says NPR reduced role of nuclear weapons:

- The review “reduces the role of nuclear weapons in our overall defense posture by declaring that the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear forces is to deter nuclear attack....Our new doctrine also extends U.S. assurances by declaring that we will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are members of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and in compliance with their non-proliferation obligations.”

Thomas Donilon, March 2011 (emphasis added)



...but also says that it can't reduce role yet because:

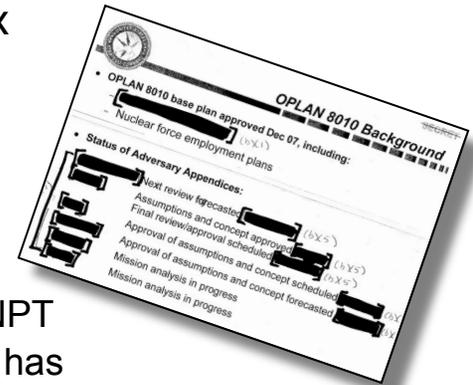
- “there remains a narrow range of contingencies in which U.S. nuclear weapons may still play a role in deterring a conventional or CBW attack against the United States or its allies and partners. The United States is therefore not prepared at the present time to adopt a universal policy that the ‘sole purpose’ of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack on the United States and our allies and partners....”

Nuclear Posture Review Report, April 2010

Reducing Role

Not evident “new doctrine” reduces nuclear planning against six adversaries in the current war plan beyond normal adjustment:

Adversary	Not affected by “reduced role” because:
Russia	it has nuclear weapons
China	it has nuclear weapons
North Korea	it has nuclear weapons and has withdrawn from the NPT
Iran	it is not considered in compliance with the NPT and it has WMD capabilities
Syria	it is not considered in compliance with the NPT and it has WMD capabilities
9/11 scenario	involves non-state actor (not member of NPT) acting alone or in collusion with “rogue” state not in compliance with/ member of NPT



Yet President Obama said in Hankuk University speech in March 2012: “We’ve narrowed the range of contingencies under which we would ever use or threaten to use nuclear weapons.”

And the administration has “committed to take concrete steps to make deterring nuclear use the sole purpose of our nuclear forces.”

Modernizations

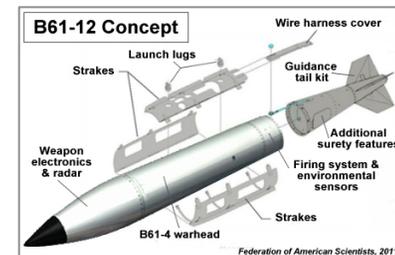
Delivery Platforms

- SSBNs:** New class of 12 boats; deployed from 2029
- ICBMs:** Replacement study underway; deployed from 2030
- Bombers:** 80-100 new bombers planned; deployed from 2025
- Fighters:** F-35 JSF Block IV nuclear capability; deployed from 2020



Warheads

- B61-12:** Modified B61-4 with new guided tail kit to increase accuracy
- W76-1:** Full-scale production underway; new fuze with enhanced options
- W78:** Possibly replacement by common warhead
- W80:** Possibly use on new ALCM on new bomber
- W88:** New AF&F; potential replacement by common warhead



Complex

- Uranium Production Facility (UPF):** Completion in mid-2020s
- Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement-New Facility (CMRR-NF):** Planned for mid-2020s but deferred for at least five years

Guidance Options for Change

“Putting an end to Cold War thinking” will require more than trimming edges of posture but changing core planning assumptions and principles against Russia and China:

- Reduce the number or scope of target categories
- Reduce requirement for warhead damage expectancy in strike options
- Reduce number of strike options
- Reduce or remove requirement to plan for prompt launch of nuclear weapons
- Reduce or remove requirement to plan for damage-limitation strikes
- Limit role to deter nuclear attack; “we have committed to take concrete steps to make nuclear use the sole purpose of our nuclear forces.” *(Thomas Donilon, March 2011)*
- Limit or end counterforce and force-on-force warfighting planning; “Counterforce is preemptive, or offensively reactive.” *(DOD, Counterproliferation Operational Architecture, April 2002)*
- Limit posture to secure retaliatory capability: core deterrence

QUESTIONS?

Further reading:

Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, "Reviewing Nuclear Guidance: Putting Obama's Words Into Action," *Arms Control Today*, November 2011, <http://tinyurl.com/7x3oamq>

Hans M. Kristensen, *Obama and the Nuclear War Plan*, FAS, February 2010, <http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2010/02/warplan.php>

Hans M. Kristensen (with Robert S. Norris and Ivan Oelrich), *From Counterforce to Minimal Deterrence*, FAS/NRDC, April 2009, <http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2009/04/targeting.php>