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UNDERSTANDING THE “WAR ON TERRORISM”: PREEMPTION, PREVAILING, & WINNING UGLY

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Who suspected Pearl Harbor would occur? Who suspected that Hitler would really be as dreadful as he turned out to be? You know, the worse possible case is generally worse than the imagination can imagine.

– Paul Nitze

We might add another question to Paul Nitze’s quote: Would Americans believe that we could be led into a War on false pretenses and then do nothing about it? That happened in Iraq. Then another question: Would those same leaders embroil us in worse circumstances that might even involve nuclear weapons? That is a pertinent question. In this paper I will present some disturbing facts, starting with certain recent events.

S TRETCHED THIN IN IRAQ,

On 2 May 2005, Air Force General Richard B. Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of America’s armed forces, presented Congress with the annual classified assessment of the US military. He warned that, because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military faces greater difficulty in launching “a preemptive strike or intervene to prevent conflict in another part of the world.”¹ He said the military is at “significant risk” in being able to prevail against enemies abroad in the manner that Pentagon war plans mandate.²

As *Los Angeles Times* staff writer Mark Mazzetti reports, this warning “comes against the background of rising tensions in Iraq and North Korea ... as well as continuing evidence that insurgents remain capable

¹Mazzetti, 3 May 2005.

²Quoted in Mazzetti, 3 May 2005.

of inflicting bloody losses on coalition troops and Iraqi security forces.”³ Thomas Donnelly, a military analyst for the conservative American Enterprise Institute, while calling Myer’s admission “a blinding flash of the obvious,” cited the Taiwan Strait as a possible new crisis “where the proximity of Taiwan to adversary China would allow hostilities to spin out of control quickly, making rapid response by the Pentagon crucial.”⁴

The White House immediately jumped in to clarify Myers’ warning lest it appear to be a weakness in the Bush administration. Deputy White House Press Secretary Trent Duffy pointed out the following day that the President has asked Congress for a 41% increase in military spending since taking office – that he has increased military salaries, training, quality-of-life initiatives, and technology. In that money-can-buy-everything mentality Duffy generalized: “We are at war, and the level of operations does have some impact on troops. But the President continues to be confident, as well as his military commanders, that we can meet any threat decisively.”⁵

On that same day, May 3rd, General Myers was more specific, and expanded on his former analysis. He told reporters: “The message I’m sending to Congress is that the United States military can fulfill its tasks under the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the National Military Strategy, and we will be successful and prevail in anything that our nation asks us to do under those strategies, and that’s the bottom line. ... We will be successful and we will prevail. No doubt about it.”⁶ Those words were repeated in a State Department press release that same day, along with Duffy’s about the President being confident we will meet the threat decisively.⁷

WINNING UGLIER

Aha! Now Myers is invoking the National Security Strategy as well as the Defense and Military strategies that proceed from it. That opens up a whole new ball game. We are no longer merely talking about Pentagon war plans mandates and personnel strengths. Now we have introduced nuclear weapons and preemptive force, perhaps both at once. No wonder Bush feels confident that the world’s only superpower will prevail. This is obviously what prompted one “senior defense official” to say: “The assessment is that we would succeed, but there would be higher casualties and more collateral damage [a euphemism for civilian casualties]. We would win uglier.”⁸

³Mazzetti, 3 May 2005.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Quoted in US State Department Press Release, 3 May 2005.

⁶US Department of Defense News Transcript, 4 May 2005.

⁷US State Department Press Release, 4 May 2005.

⁸Quoted in Mazzetti, 3 May 2005.

I discussed *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* in a previous paper.⁹ The latest National Defense Strategy and National Military Strategy have recently been formulated in compliance. But the National Security Strategy is the overarching doctrine. All other strategies and doctrines originate with it and flow from it. I will repeat a few paragraphs from that previous paper.

Ostensibly because of the “war on terrorism,” the 23-page document released on 20 September 2002 departs markedly from any security strategy of the past. It proclaims that “US national security strategy will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests.”¹⁰ What values are referred to are uncertain, but the national interests are unmistakably business interests. And that international opinion will not get in the way of those interests is also unmistakable. The strategy paper also states that “we will be prepared to act apart when our interests and unique responsibilities require.”¹¹

Under the guise of fighting terrorism, Bush’s national security strategy takes on a more aggressive tone, stating that “we recognize that our best defense is a good offense.”¹² Bush embraces an aggressive preemptive attack against enemies perceived to have the technology to threaten the US: “And, as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats **before they are formed**.”¹³ (Emphasis added.) Later in the report it gets more specific: “While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country ...”¹⁴ Preemption is woven all through the strategy document. As part of the comprehensive strategy to combat weapons of mass destruction, the document reads: “We must deter and defend against the threat before it is released.”¹⁵ And, “the United States can no longer rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past.... We cannot let our enemies strike first.”¹⁶

The strategy paper continues: “The greater the threat, the greater the risk of inaction -- and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the

⁹See PLRC-030503 – *Understanding the “War on Terrorism”: “Pax Americana” and Preemptive Force.*

¹⁰*National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, p. 3.

¹¹*Ibid*, p. 23.

¹²*Ibid*, p. 6.

¹³*Ibid*, p. 1.

¹⁴*Ibid*, p. 6.

¹⁵*Ibid*, p. 10.

¹⁶*Ibid*, p. 11.

United States will, if necessary, act preemptively.”¹⁷ It seems quite clear that the US has adopted a public and announced first-strike policy. It wasn’t long after that national security strategy document was released that we saw the full ramifications of this newly announced aggressive doctrine, in Iraq.

J OINT USE OF THE NUKES

As disturbing as all this is, it may still be considered a rehash of old information if it weren’t for the accidental surfacing of another document recently. I came across an article in the 2 May 2005 issue of *The Japan Times* which started out: “The US military is considering allowing regional combat commanders to request presidential approval for preemptive nuclear strikes against possible attacks with weapons of mass destruction on the United States or its allies ...”¹⁸ The article went on to describe a paper dated 15 March 2005, drafted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, entitled *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations* which provided “guidelines for the joint employment of forces in nuclear operations.”¹⁹ The article said nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons were identified as requiring preemptive destruction and cited Iran, North Korea, and some other countries as threats.

I was perplexed at how this document came to public knowledge and, also, why we have not seen anything about it in the American press. So I sent an e-mail to a colleague in Japan and he furnished some information he had uncovered.²⁰

It seems that the Joint Chiefs of Staff posted a planning document on the internet. On 4 April 2005, Jeffrey Lewis posted a comment on an arms control weblog telling how, with the Google search engine, he “discovered that the joint Staff keeps draft documents and comments on a public webserver at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/ddraaffit_pubs. He continued: “I decided to download (and compare) multiple copies of the draft *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations* ... from September 2003 and March 2005, as well as first and second round of comments from the services and a contractor.”^{21, 22}

I used the link provided by Lewis to get the March 2005 copy of *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*. The document makes reference to the *2001 Nuclear Posture Review* and seems to draw from it. I have

¹⁷*Ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁸*The Japan Times*, 2 May 2005.

¹⁹Quoted in *The Japan Times*, 2 May 2005. Stated in *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*, p. i.

²⁰I thank my friend and fellow researcher, Rick Davis, who resides in Ashigawa, Japan, for providing information and copies of Eastern media articles that have helped me prepare this paper.

²¹Lewis, 4 April 2005.

²²These documents have since been removed from the internet. See Lewis, 4 April 2005, for a link to copies of these documents.

also discussed this NPR in a previous paper.²³ However, I believe it would be helpful here to digress momentarily and repeat some of the paragraphs from that previous paper.

In September 2000 Congress commissioned the second Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) -- the first by this name took place in 1994. This second NPR was completed after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, and the secret report was submitted to Congress on 8 January 2002.

The NPR report was leaked to the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper in March 2002.²⁴ It named seven countries as potential targets for tactical nuclear weapons -- Russia, China, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Syria, and Libya. Three conditions were listed that could call for the use of nuclear weapons: 1) to destroy targets invulnerable to conventional weapons, 2) in retaliation to a nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons attack, and 3) in the event of a “surprising military development.”

When asked about the leaked information from the NPR, President George W. Bush on 13 March 2002 answered: “We’ve got all options on the table, because we want to make it very clear to nations that you will not threaten the United States or use weapons of mass destruction against us, or our allies or friends.”²⁵

General Richard Meyers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, further confirmed the accuracy of the leaked information -- the NPR “preserves for the president all the options that a president would want in case this country or our friends and allies were attacked by weapons of mass destruction.”²⁶ Meyers also alluded to what a “surprising military development” might be -- something like Iraq attacking Israel, North Korea attacking South Korea, or China attacking Taiwan.²⁷

With those comments in mind, let me now return to March 2005 *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*. The body of this document consists of three chapters. Chapter III is titled “Theater Nuclear Operations.” The chapter starts: “Geographic combatant commanders may request Presidential approval for use of nuclear weapons for a variety of conditions.”²⁸ Several examples of such conditions are then listed.

Nukes To Preempt a WMD Threat.

One of the conditions that calls for preemptive use of nuclear weapons is: “An adversary using **or intending to use** WMD against US, multinational, or alliance forces or civilian populations.” (Emphasis added.) Another is: “Attacks on adversary installations including WMD ... or the C2 [Command & Control]

²³See PLRC-011117D – *US Trident Submarine & Missile System: The Ultimate First-Strike Weapon*.

²⁴Richter.

²⁵White House Press Conference, 13 March 2002. Also cited in Stober

²⁶Cited in Norton-Taylor.

²⁷Listed in Norton-Taylor

²⁸*Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*, p. III-2.

infrastructure required for the adversary to execute a WMD attack against the United States or its friends and allies.”²⁹ Postulating either of these conditions could be used to justify the preemptive destruction of Iran’s or North Korea’s bomb-making facilities.

Nukes To Compensate For Conventional Weaknesses.

Most of the conditions listed refer to confronting weapons of mass destruction but three, buried among the others, open the door to almost anything. They are:³⁰

- To counter potentially overwhelming adversary conventional forces, including mobile and area targets (troop concentrations).
- For rapid and favorable war termination on US terms.
- To ensure success of US multinational operations.

It is easy to see now why the President is confident that American forces will prevail. If, for example, North Korea invaded the South when US troops are stretched thin in Iraq, under this doctrine it would be allowed to use nuclear weapons to prevent the defeat of an ally. The same thing applies in the scenario of China invading Taiwan. Recall that General Myers, in responding to a question regarding the 2001 NPR, used these two scenarios as examples of a “surprising military development” that would warrant use of nuclear weapons.

Pentagon Disclaimers, Of Course.

Pentagon officials say this *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations* is only a planning document in the discussion stage – it is not yet an authority to cite. That is like saying we have no **present** plans to attack Iran – or that the administration **hopes** diplomacy will work with North Korea. Given the secrecy in the Bush administration, would you bet the world that this doctrine hasn’t been approved? Let me relate some very recent events in the Asia-Pacific region.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

On 23 April 2005 the *Washington Post* reported that “US officials are increasingly concerned that North Korea may be preparing its first test of a nuclear weapons. ...”³¹ Five days later the US State Department once again labeled North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism – “North Korea continues to

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Kessler, 23 April 2005.

be a state sponsor of terrorism, according to the *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004*, the State Department's annual study mandated by the US Congress.³² On that same day, the State Department also announced US intentions to work with North Korea's neighbors to solve the problem diplomatically: "The president said all options are on the table, but 'our aim is to solve this problem diplomatically' with the other members of the Six Party Talks."³³

Well, the US pursued talks in the UN Security Council, too, until Bush decided that aerial photos and other intelligence sources indicated Iraq was too much of a threat to wait any longer. A preemptive attack in that case solved one of Bush's problems but not the ones that he used to justify that war – those problems didn't exist. Those same intelligence agencies are now feeding information to the White House regarding North Korea. On 29 April 2005, *The New York Times* reported that "American intelligence agencies believed North Korea had mastered the technology for arming its missiles with nuclear warheads, an assessment that if correct, means the North could build weapons to threaten Japan and perhaps the western United States."³⁴ As if to corroborate the US assessment, on 1 May 2005 "North Korea test fired a short-range missile that plunged into the Sea of Japan. ..."³⁵ It was not a particularly spectacular demonstration, and nothing that hadn't been done before, but coming at this time seemed to punctuate the US assessment. It prompted US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to say the US "maintains significant deterrent capability of all kinds in the Asia-Pacific region" to thwart North Korea's nuclear ambitions.³⁶

A few days later, on May 6th, *The New York Times* reported that "White House and Pentagon officials are closely monitoring a recent stream of satellite photographs of North Korea that appear to show rapid, extensive preparations for a nuclear weapons test ... North Korea has never tested a nuclear weapon."³⁷ The *Times* followed up the next day with a report that the "White House warned North Korea on Friday [May 6th] that conducting a nuclear test would be 'a provocative act,'" although a "few intelligence officials urged caution in interpreting the satellite evidence."³⁸ That brings us up to date in the political-diplomatic area. Now I will turn to some discomfiting events in the military realm.

³²US State Department Press Release, "North Korea Named Again As State Sponsor Of Terrorism," 28 April 2005.

³³US State Department Press Release, "US Will Pursue 'Common Approach' to North Korea, Bush Says," 28 April 2005.

³⁴Cloud and Sanger, 29 April 2005.

³⁵Lee, 1 May 2005.

³⁶Quoted in Sang-min, 6 May 2005.

³⁷Sanger and Broad, 6 May 2005.

³⁸Sanger, 7 May 2005.

GETTING ALL THE OPTIONS ON THE TABLE

GThe *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations* says that “Nuclear Weapons and associated systems may be deployed into theaters, but combatant commanders have no authority to employ them until that authority is specifically granted by the President.”³⁹ Ok, the first is to get them in the theater and that seems to be what is happening. The 6 May 2005 edition of *The Korea Herald* describes a US military buildup in the Pacific and the Sea of Japan. (Why don’t we find this type of news in the US papers?) First it reports a buildup of B-2 bombers and F-15E fighter jets on Guam. B-2s can carry nuclear-armed air-launched cruise missiles and F-15Es can carry nuclear gravity bombs such as various models of the B-61.

There have been for decades a deployment of US forces in the western Pacific a “deterrent against any possible North Korean aggression” but the current activity “could heighten tensions on the Korean Peninsula as Washington’s patience wears thin in dealing with Pyongyang...”⁴⁰ *The Korea Herald* reports: “For the first time, a B-2 Spirit bomber squadron with stealth functions was deployed in late February for a two-month tour of duty at Anderson Air Force Base in Guam to enhance security in the western Pacific, according to US Air Force Officials. But the squadron is extending its stay for an indefinite time.”⁴¹

The *Herald* article continues: “Twelve F-15E Strike Eagles from Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, arrived at Anderson in Guam recently on indefinite deployment, according to *Stars & Stripes*, the US military newspaper.”⁴²

Chapter III of the *Doctrine For Joint Nuclear Operations* emphasized how nuclear and conventional forces must be integrated for certain operations. The document points out: “Nuclear operations in the theater may require a significant conventional support package that addresses concerns such as aerial refueling ...”⁴³ Accordingly, the F-15E presence on Guam “is supported by the New York National Guard’s 107th Air Refueling Wing, which means the fighters can extend their combat activities through aerial refueling, rolling in over a wide range of the Korean Peninsula.”⁴⁴

The US Seventh Fleet is now rotating three Aegis warships in the Sea of Japan, ostensibly to detect any North Korean missile firings and send information to the proper units to shoot them down. But Aegis ships also use the vertical launch tube which can fire Tomahawk missiles. Although nuclear Tomahawks were put in storage in 1991, the *Doctrine For Joint Nuclear Operations* has a word to say about that: “Nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missiles [Tomahawks], removed from ships and submarines under

³⁹*Ibid*, p. III-6.

⁴⁰Sang-min, 6 May 2005.

⁴¹*Ibid*.

⁴²*Ibid*.

⁴³*Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*, p. III-5.

⁴⁴Sang-min, 6 May 2005.

the 1991 Presidential Nuclear Initiative, are secured in central areas where they remain available, if necessary, for a crisis.’⁴⁵

There is one other capability that isn’t advertised much about nuclear Tomahawks. The Ground-Launched Cruise Missiles which were removed from Europe under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) were Also Tomahawks. They were identical to their sea-launched counterpart except for the warhead. The missiles were destroyed per the Treaty, but the warheads were stored. The sea-launched Tomahawk originally used the 200-kiloton W80, Mod-0 warhead. But the ground-launched version used the W-84 warhead which has a selective yield from 10 to 50 kilotons. At least 500 were produced. It does not seem unreasonable to presume that these would be fitted to the sea-launched Tomahawks if they are again deployed aboard ships. The smaller yield would make them more adaptable to theater use. They would therefore be more attractive, and more likely to be used, because they would reduce the undesirable political backlash from collateral damage.

One more thought on theater nuclear weapons. The *Doctrine For Joint Nuclear Operations* specifies that, “Command, control, and coordination must be flexible enough to allow the geographic combatant commander to strike time-sensitive targets ...”⁴⁶ That could mean that the President would pre-delegate authority to use nuclear weapons under certain conditions. But the *Doctrine* goes still further: “Since options do not exist for every scenario, combatant commanders must have a capability to perform crisis action planning and execute those plans. Crisis action planning provides the capability to develop new options, or modify existing options, when current limited or major response options are inappropriate.”⁴⁷ That is scary! That means that when a Presidential release of nuclear weapons is given, whether on-the-spot or pre-delegated, the regional commander has the discretion to change the plans, or targets, or timing, or whatever. We are putting the future of a large segment of the world, in the hands of a person making decisions under stress. Yes, that is real scary.

CONCLUSION

I have not written this paper to predict a doomsday scenario. I am just worried about what really will happen if North Korea detonates a nuclear bomb in a test. It is hard to predict. So I am trying to ring the bell to put people on the alert. Before the situation becomes any more tense we should exercise our democratic rights and make our desires known. That is how a responsible democracy works. I am worried that so many people in this country don’t try to connect the proverbial dots. They need a smoking gun or a signed confession to believe anything bad about our government. I am writing this paper in the hopes that Americans will take charge of their government before it is too late – before the doctrine of preemption goes nuclear. Even if the Korean crisis is solved diplomatically, this doctrine on nuclear use will not evaporate. We must be proactive citizens.

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⁴⁵*Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*, p. III-3.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷*Ibid*, p. III-5.

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GLOSSARY

- INF Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces.
- NPR Nuclear Posture Review.
- WMD Weapons of Mass Destruction.