

AMERICA'S NUCLEAR STRATEGY: DEFENSIVE OR FIRST STRIKE?

In the wake of the cold war, Americans have been propagandized into believing nuclear weapons are benign. We are told these weapons are only a defensive hedge against any aspiring nuclear power -- we are not told that more effective means of preventing international rivalry are going untried. We are assured that nuclear weapons are no longer aimed at cities -- we are not told it takes only minutes to switch the targets back again. We are told that nuclear weapons safeguard America's interest -- we are not told those interests are exploiting the valuable resources, the best land, and the cheap wages from which the richest countries prosper while unrest grows among the poorer. Let us look at some more facts.

1. **Satellite warfare** has been advancing with a little known annual budget for years, while ballistic missile defense technologies are also applicable against satellites. Now, under the euphemism of "Space Control," the Pentagon wants to increase spending. In a US first strike, destroying an enemy's early warning and communications satellites would hinder getting the launch command to his missiles before they are destroyed.
2. **America's long-range nuclear missiles** -- both land-based and submarine-based -- are said to deter another country from striking first. Yet the pinpoint accuracy of those weapons makes them deadly against extremely hard targets such as missile silos -- targets which must be destroyed in a first strike before the missiles are launched.
3. **Submarine warfare** missions -- mainly intelligence gathering -- have increased, claims the Pentagon. It now wants to increase the current inventory of 56 attack subs to 68 by 2015. These subs can also track the reduced number of Russian missile-launching subs which are confined to the Barents Sea and the Sea Of Okhotsk, and destroy them on command.
4. **Ballistic missile defense** is presented as needed to guard against a small number of missiles such as an accidental launch by a nuclear power or a strike by a rogue nation. But what is being developed would just as easily intercept enemy missiles that survived a US first strike.
5. **Command, control, communications, and intelligence** has been vigorously pursued by the US military. These are necessary to integrate and coordinate the previous four items.

The systems itemized above are the five essential ingredients of a first-strike capability. The US is vigorously pursuing each one and some are at a high degree of perfection. As the old axiom goes: actions speak louder than words. In this case, a country's intentions are more accurately determined by the capabilities it seeks, rather than policy statements it promulgates. America has, or is very close to achieving, a disarming and unanswerable first-strike capability.