National Security Decision Memorandum 16

TO: The Secretary of State
    The Secretary of Defense
    The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Criteria for Strategic Sufficiency

As a result of the June 18, 1969 National Security Council meeting, the President has made the following decision:

For planning purposes, strategic sufficiency as far as nuclear attacks on the United States are concerned should be defined as follows:

1. Maintain high confidence that our second strike capability is sufficient to deter an all-out surprise attack on our strategic forces.

2. Maintain forces to insure that the Soviet Union would have no incentive to strike the United States first in a crisis.

3. Maintain the capability to deny to the Soviet Union the ability to cause significantly more deaths and industrial damage in the United States in a nuclear war than they themselves would suffer.

4. Deploy defenses which limit damage from small attacks or accidental launches to a low level.

Pending further studies, the President has directed that these criteria be used by all agencies in considering issues relating to the U.S. strategic posture.

cc: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
    Director, Bureau of the Budget
    Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
    Director, Office of Emergency Preparedness
    Director, U.S. Information Agency
    Director, Office of Science and Technology

Henry A. Kissinger

Declassified/Released on 2/17/87 under provisions of E.O. 12356 by F. Graboske, National Security Council