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MEMORANDUM

NSC review(s) completed.

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March 31, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI *ZB*

SUBJECT:

Our Nuclear War Doctrine: Limited Nuclear  
Options and Regional Nuclear Options

OSD review completed

Our investigation of the White House Emergency Procedures for short-warning nuclear attack has thrown up the question of our nuclear war doctrine. The SIOP, as you know, offers retaliatory options short of a full response, but they remain massive in both direct and collateral damage. NSDM 242, issued in January 1974, prescribed new guidance for nuclear weapons employment -- limited nuclear targetting -- and led to considerable controversy over the design of "limited nuclear options" (LNOs). In principle, the new doctrine was to provide the President with options short of all-out nuclear war in crises. In practice it produced several problems and no solutions:

- Policy guidance justifying planning for each LNO: The rationale for particular LNOs has yet to be satisfactorily developed. Technically, an LNO is easy to design, but choosing purposes for specific LNOs is not. Progress in this area has apparently been nil although a few LNOs have received JCS approval.
- Limited nuclear war fighting procedures: How and from where does the President conduct such a war? From the White House? The NEACP? The Pentagon? The underground alternate National Command Center?
- Coordination of intelligence and operations: Does the DCI manage post-strike assessment and other intelligence for the National Military Command Center's conduct of limited nuclear operations? How? With whose assets? What command authority?
- Vulnerability of the National Command Authority: The Blue Ribbon Defense Panel of 1970 presented a disturbing evaluation of the survivability of our command and control. The National Command Authority and political succession were among the weaker links. The situation today is not appreciably different.

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In view of these issues, I suggest that you ask the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, JCS, to:

- a. Explain what they understand as our present nuclear war doctrine. They should comment on the advisability of retaining or cancelling NSDM 242 and limited nuclear options.
- b. Explain the procedures they envisage for actually conducting a nuclear war, limited or total, beyond the initial attack phase.
- c. Set forth the objectives we would hope to achieve through LNO's and the system we have for thinking through the political and military implications for executing specific LNO's.

If approved, I will prepare an appropriate draft memorandum to Sec Def. 23.

Approve

Disapprove

Comment

*J*

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