



Increasing the Scope of Targets

Requirements and a Proposed Solution

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The Path to Zero

- **The United States has reaffirmed its commitment to a world without nuclear weapons.**
- **The path to zero is likely to be gradual.**
- **Some observers believe that U.S. nuclear forces will need to modify employment policies to allow the stockpile to become substantially smaller**
 - **E.g., some U.S. senators worry that reductions lead to “minimum deterrence posture”**
 - **E.g., Kristensen, et al. (2009) advocate “infrastructure targeting”**
 - **Emphasizes economic importance instead of (or in addition to) military importance.**



Outline

- **A wider range of targets beyond military targets would increase flexibility.**
 - **Could help maintain credible deterrence as stockpiles reduce in size.**
- **Several requirements must be met for targeting changes to be credible and deterrence to be effective.**
 - **Difficulties in meeting these requirements may be a significant impediment to stockpile reductions**
- **A new strategy, “commercial targeting,” may meet these requirements, thereby facilitating the reductions**



A Wide Range of Targets is Desirable

- **At worst, an increased choice of targets allows the same targeting**
- **At best, it increases flexibility and the deterrent ability of the stockpile**
 - **Could choose higher-valued targets**
- **Deterrence of Counterforce may Decrease**
 - **Increased accuracy may decrease the collateral risk of counterforce targeting, reducing deterrence.**
 - **Improvements in non-nuclear capabilities may make counterforce targeting less credible**
 - **U.S. policymakers unlikely to use nuclear weapons for missions where non-nuclear weapons are available**
 - **Non-nuclear capabilities further reduce collateral risk**



Countervalue Targeting is Not Credible

- **Historically, U.S. leaders have emphasized military and industrial targets rather than countervalue targets like cities and civilians**
- **Counterforce has countervalue aspects due to collateral risk to civilians**
 - **Power of nuclear weapons**
 - **Inaccuracies in delivery**
 - **Uncertainties about targets**
- **Improvements in technology have reduced countervalue aspects**
- **The American public, their representatives, and the military will continue to be reluctant to target civilians**



Some Requirements for Target Changes

Legal

Civilian Risk

Requires Nuclear

Valued

- 1. New targets must be legal**
- 2. Changes in targeting should not increase collateral risk to civilians**
- 3. New targets should be chosen that cannot be reasonably held at risk by non-nuclear capabilities**
- 4. To successfully deter, new targets should be valued highly by ourselves (credible) and adversaries (cost/benefit).**



“Infrastructure Targeting”



- Kristensen, et al. (2009): Target relatively isolated assets that support war industries
- Reduces civilian risk
- Does not require nuclear capabilities (especially in a limited strike)
- Targets of limited relative value



Subset of Existing Targets

~~Legal~~
~~Civilian Risk~~
Requires Nuclear
Valued ?

- Acton (2011) supports choosing from existing targets.
- Probably not legal if choices based on “the deterrent value of collateral damage”
 - Tradeoff of civilian risk and value
- Otherwise, default if existing targeting strategy remains viable



“Commercial Targeting”

- **One possible option that may fill these requirements**
 - **Demonstrates difficulties of changing targeting**
- **Could be incorporated into flexible strategies**
- **Takes advantage of time afforded to 2nd strike**
 - **U.S. announces intention to hit unnamed target**
 - **Cause mass evacuations of adversary’s population**
 - **Produces large economic consequences**
- **Targets modern economic engines like central business districts, ports, and industrial areas**
 - **This capital drives economies and directly or indirectly enables a country’s war industries**
 - **Consistent with international norms (sanctions)**



“Commercial Targeting”



- **Probably legal**
 - Perhaps not for civilian-owned targets?
- **Reduces civilian risk**
 - Maintains basic life-sustaining industries like agriculture



“Commercial Targeting”



- **Nuclear weapons required**

- Increased psychological consequences (symbolic)

- **Large economic impacts**

- Probably credible, but does this deter adversaries?
- Spares civilians (“human capital”) dampening long-term economic impacts
 - Could reduce stability?

If existing targeting strategies are not viable as stockpiles shrink, the journey to zero could be halted. Developing credible and effective new strategies will be a challenge.