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Nuclear modernization in NATO: Atlantic cohesion and nuclear deterrence

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NUCLEAR MODERNIZATION IN NATO:
ATLANTIC COHESION AND
NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

by
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This study examines the tactical nuclear policies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and assesses the most recently implemented component of those policies, the deployment of ground-launched cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe. A brief history of American nuclear strategy is presented before the focus of the study, the 1979 decision to deploy modernized long-range nuclear weapons, is examined. An analysis of the military and political considerations which prompted American officials to support the European initiative for modernization of the Alliance's nuclear forces forms the basis for the study's conclusions.

The author relies primarily on Congressional documents and the statements and writings of officials of the Executive Branch of the United States government for source material. Books and articles by political analysts and newspaper and journal articles are also cited.

The study concludes that the U.S. decision to deploy the new missile systems was not based on military considerations. The administration of President Jimmy Carter was convinced that the new deployments were needed to enhance the cohesiveness of the Alliance and were necessary to secure the role of the United States as Allied leader. The ground-launched cruise and Pershing II missiles had not been developed within the context of a cohesive U.S. plan for nuclear force structuring, but because of the pace of technology, these systems were available to fill a role as symbols of America's commitment to the Atlantic Alliance.

The study notes that many proponents of the new deployments believed that the missiles would fill a dangerous gap in the Alliance's deterrent structure. The author disagrees with this assessment and contends that both the ground-launched cruise and Pershing II systems should be categorized as strategic weapons. He concludes the study by pointing out that strategic weapons deployed in vulnerable, forward positions increase the dangers of nuclear escalation. He recommends that the Alliance attempt to find a less dangerous, more appropriate symbol of Atlantic cohesion.
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INTRODUCTION

On December 31, 1983, the first of a new generation of intermediate-range nuclear missiles officially became operational in Britain and West Germany. Despite an autumn of sometimes violent protests by groups opposed to the deployments, and in the face of Soviet threats to suspend arms control negotiations, the final decision to deploy had been confirmed by the ruling parties in London and Bonn, and implemented by the government of the United States. During debates in all three countries, supporters of the new systems emphasized the importance of the deployments in strengthening the political cohesion and enhancing the military deterrent posture of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

From its inception NATO's deterrent strategy has stressed reliance on the military prowess of the United States. Many prominent U.S. policymakers have insisted that an effective, credible deterrent can be maintained only through a military program which matches or exceeds that of the Soviet Union. Others responsible for military planning have argued that policies which attempt to match U.S. and Soviet military systems accelerate the arms race, unduly increase defense spending, and do little to enhance the security of either nation.
Worldwide military expenditures for 1982 totaled $660 billion dollars. It seems quite clear that such excessive military spending must be harmful to the world's economic, social, and political order. Yet, it seems just as clear that recent military policies have been planned and implemented by rational leaders working within existing national and international systems.

This study will focus on the most recently implemented component of Western deterrent strategy, the NATO deployment of ground-launched cruise and Pershing II missiles, and will examine the political and military considerations which led to the decision to station these systems in Europe. The relationship of the deployment to the concepts of nuclear threshold and escalation control will also be discussed.

Proponents of NATO's nuclear modernization program have maintained that the installation of the ground-launched cruise and Pershing II missiles was an essential element in reestablishing the credibility of the Alliance's nuclear deterrent. A major purpose of the following study is to test the accuracy of this claim.

Critics of the American military establishment contend that new weapons systems are often developed and deployed without consideration of their political consequences. The following study will examine the validity of this thesis in the context of NATO's tactical nuclear history and as it
applies to the 1983 modernization program.

The Alliance decision to upgrade its intermediate nuclear systems set off a series of debates and public protests which weakened the internal cohesion of the West German government and, by early 1984, threatened the survival of the governments in Belgium and the Netherlands. The tensions inherent in any alliance of sixteen sovereign states increased perceptibly as discussions of the deployments led to a critical examination of the credibility of America's nuclear commitment to the Alliance. The U.S. role as Allied leader also came under close scrutiny during the debates.

Since deployments in West Germany, Britain, and Italy were still underway in early 1984, and the final decisions on modernization had not been made by the governments of Belgium and the Netherlands, public debate and protest seemed likely to continue for some time, contributing to further pressures on the cohesiveness of the Alliance.

The need for deterrence has always been acknowledged by members of the Alliance, but debates on the proper mix of military forces needed to pose a credible deterrent have been a persistent source of intra-Alliance tension. The first chapter of this study examines the history of the role of tactical nuclear weapons in Allied deterrent strategy. The remaining chapters examine the military and political considerations which prompted U.S. policymakers to deploy the ground-launched cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe.
CHAPTER I

U.S. TACTICAL NUCLEAR POLICY: 1945 TO 1976

Americans celebrating the new year of 1946 had much cause for optimism. U.S. industry, spared from the ravages of the recent war, was in a position to dominate expanding world markets, and the new United Nations, formed by the victorious allies, seemed to offer real hope that all nations could cooperate in avoiding future worldwide massacres. Yet for U.S. policymakers the months following the end of hostilities were filled with ominous signs that the promise of lasting peace was an illusion. Soviet actions in Europe could hardly be perceived as conforming to the spirit of the United Nations Charter, and as if to confirm that cooperation between East and West had been only a fleeting dream, Josef Stalin delivered a distinctly anti-American diatribe in February 1946. A month later Winston Churchill responded with his "iron curtain" speech. The cold war had been declared.

It soon became clear to the Allies on the western side of this curtain that while economic recovery was essential for long term stability, some economic programs would have to be sacrificed in order to maintain the military forces with which to counter Soviet strength. The lessons of the last war seemed very clear to the Western Allies:
appeasement was an invitation to aggression, and aggressors understood only one element of national policy, military power. Stalin seemed reluctant to demobilize his massive army. Yet Western Europe, divided and still devastated by the effects of war, could hardly be expected to field forces substantial enough to persuade the Soviet Union that aggression would not pay. England, which historically had acted to balance the military equation on the continent, was no longer strong enough to do so. In the new world order the United States would fill that role, and in the age old tradition of balance of power politics the role was cast within the context of a military alliance. In many ways the part which the United States was about to play seemed quite conventional, with many of the same actors playing in their same roles, but the new drama was about to be enacted on a very different stage, in "a weird and nightmare land as yet undreamed of—the world of the atom."¹

The Alliance, Acheson, and the Atom

Many Europeans viewed U.S. atomic power as the most promising element in plans for Western defense. Churchill called upon the Americans to bear the "awful atomic burden" bravely in the fight against tyranny, and assured Secretary of State Dean Acheson that the main guarantee of peace in the world rested in the U.S. atomic arsenal. For his part,
Acheson admitted that if the American nuclear deterrent had not been taken into account in the early years of the Atlantic Alliance the task of defense would have seemed impossible. The reliance on the atomic option may explain, in part, why Acheson emphatically insisted during the hearings on ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty that large contingents of U.S. troops would not be stationed in Europe. Reliance on atomic weapons, however, would not be the official policy of the United States.

Although in general terms, President Harry Truman believed that the power of the atom would be of "key importance in the search for a peaceful world," he was one of the foremost proponents of strong conventional forces within NATO. His confidence in atomic deterrence had been tempered even before the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty by a report of the President's Air Policy Commission (known as the Finletter Commission) in January 1948. The Finletter Report noted that wars of the future would, indeed, almost certainly be fought with the new weapons of mass destruction, but in sobering terms the commission reported that "other nations" were bound to develop these weapons and estimated that by 1952 they would be able to produce them in large

* Definitions of starred items appear in Appendix A
quantities. The commission also estimated that by the same year these nations might be able to produce missiles capable of delivering atomic bombs to the U.S. mainland. The commission recommended that the U.S. begin an immediate, massive military buildup and concluded that since weapons technology had eliminated the protection once afforded the United States by its geographical isolation the buildup would have to continue indefinitely into the future. The commission suggested that military spending be increased steadily from the $10 billion expended in 1947 to $18 billion by 1952, with emphasis being placed on procurements for the Air Force.

The Finletter Report, together with a similarly bleak submission made by a presidential advisory group on military training (the Compton Commission) produced a strong impact within the administration's military planning structure. In October 1948, the National Security Council formulated a new policy (NSC/68) based on the premise that Soviet possession of large quantities of atomic weapons together with their overwhelming superiority in conventional forces would create a serious military imbalance in Europe. To redress the imbalance a large number of additional ground troops would be needed and efforts to unify the U.S. armed forces would have to be initiated. It was estimated that the maximum year of danger—when advances in the Soviets' atomic weapons would allow her to take advantage of her
superior conventional forces—would be 1954. A concerted expansion of conventional strength would have to be undertaken to assure that the Western Allies would be prepared to meet a conventional attack by that time. Convincing the U.S. Congress and European Allies that these new forces were needed, however, might well have been impossible "had not the Russians been stupid enough to have instigated the attack against Korea."8

The effect of the Korean invasion on the Atlantic Alliance was profound. Within a year U.S. military forces had doubled; additional American troops were sent to Europe, and eventually U.S. strategic nuclear forces were moved into England to deter Soviet military action in Western Europe. In the long run, the Korean war acted as the catalyst for inclusion of Germany in NATO's defense structure.

One of the obvious lessons of the Korean war was that U.S. atomic weapons would not deter communist military adventures. The stationing of the American nuclear "retardation force" in Britain, however, convinced some NATO planners that the strain which would be placed on the struggling economies of Western Europe by a massive conventional build-up could be alleviated by the substitution of an atomic deterrent to the Soviet threat.9

The communist invasion of Korea helped persuade the U.S. Congress to appropriate the funds required to implement
NSC/68. Representatives of the administration made it clear to Congressional leaders that the safety of the United States would require "balanced collective forces" stationed in Europe "to continue to deter aggression after our atomic advantage has been diminished." By June 1951, American policymakers had conceded the fact that in case of major war with Russia there was no reasonable doubt that the United States "would have to sustain a heavy attack of atomic bombs." American leaders were beginning to view the nuclear deterrent as incredible; European leaders would soon join them in this perception.

U.S. concern regarding dependence on atomic weapons was apparently reflected in the force goals set by the North Atlantic Council which met in Lisbon in February 1952. The Council agreed that NATO should field fifty divisions in Europe by the end of the year, seventy-five by the end of 1953, and an ambitious ninety-six divisions by the end of 1954. It soon became clear to all involved, however, that actual deployments would fall far short of these goals. In part this can be attributed to the European belief that "a new wind was blowing from the West" (i.e., presidential candidate Dwight Eisenhower), but the major cause was "the growing belief that military plans were outgrowing the economic means to execute them."
New developments in military hardware and strategy also added to the Europeans’ reluctance to bolster their conventional forces. Nine months after the Lisbon meeting the United States exploded the first hydrogen bomb. The remarkable military applications of nuclear fission were now overshadowed by the fantastic applications of nuclear fusion. Would the Soviets be able to close this enormous atomic gap? The need for substantial conventional forces seemed even more remote, and the mystique of the atom bomb faded as specific data revealing the true potential of the hydrogen device became public.

The process of demystification continued as U.S. forces conducted live-round testing of the new atomic cannon in the final months of 1952. Following one test, members of an observation team from the Atomic Energy Commission commented that the new kind of atomic warfare that now could be waged was "very promising as a means of halting aggression without the risk of destroying large parts of the world in the process." If strategic uses of nuclear weapons were becoming less credible as Soviet stockpiles increased, perhaps the use of tactical nuclear forces would reduce military expenditures.

Implementation of programs for atomic weapons used on the tactical level had not officially been given serious consideration during the first few years following Hiroshima.
and Nagasaki. It was not until 1949 that General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, authorized development of tactical nuclear weapons. Two years later, the United States had tested small, one kiloton devices that could be used in tactical situations. The new, low-yield devices so impressed Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Gordon Dean, that he commented:

We can with complete justification treat the tactical atom — divested of the awesome cloak of destruction which surrounds it in its strategic role — in the same manner other weapons are treated.\(^{15}\)

As new military tactics were devised, the revolutionary, and rather bizarre, nature of the new weapons became clear. Instead of attacking an enemy's weakest point, nuclear warriors might well attack at the strongest. Mobility became a necessity; concentrations were prohibited. Field commanders in the new age would be forced to deal with the tactics of "atomic envelopment" and obliged to consider options as undesirable as "defense of ground zero."\(^{16}\) Although Secretary Acheson acknowledged that the atomic artillery shell might provide part of the answer to the Soviet threat on the ground, after the Korean war he maintained that large contingents of ground forces were an absolutely essential element in the defense of Europe. His final memorandum to President Truman urged that additional forces be deployed on the European continent. These forces never materialized.
The Dwight Eisenhower administration had come to power promising substantial cuts in the military budget of the United States. It proposed to do so in a variety of ways. Rather than proceeding with the massive military expansion which the Pinletter Commission had considered essential, the new President called for a more gradual, longer term program of defense spending. This "long haul" approach would emphasize appropriating resources in such a manner that the maximum deterrent would be provided at the lowest cost. The spokesman for U.S. foreign policy, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, insisted that it was folly to spend so much on the military that it threatened to bankrupt the country.17

Before taking office, Dulles had made clear the means by which the United States would effectively and economically counter the Soviet threat. Matching Russia man-for-man and tank-for-tank would lead to economic disaster. America would, instead, "develop the will and organize the means to retaliate instantly against open aggression by the Red armies...by means of our choosing." Those "means" would be atomic weapons, which used on a massive scale possessed the power to halt aggression.18 On the surface it appeared that once in power, Eisenhower and Dulles would rely on a
policy of "massive retaliation" as the foundation of U.S. military strategy.

In practice, however, "massive retaliation" was little more than a highly rhetorical restatement of the already established nuclear deterrent posture of the United States and Atlantic Alliance. It had been well understood that the policy of the Truman administration posed a real, nuclear-based threat against Soviet aggression in Western Europe.

Eisenhower's initial correspondence with Dulles had expressed reservations regarding exclusive reliance on strategic nuclear forces, and Dulles was careful to point out that "massive atomic and thermonuclear retaliation is not the kind of power which could most usefully be evoked under all circumstances." The administration was acutely aware of the distinction between local and general war, and Dulles often stressed the need for "flexibility of the means to deter."

The "massive retaliation" posture did, however, play an important role in Alliance politics. Viewed in the light of the Dulles rhetoric, nuclear deterrence took on an unreal air, and since the new doctrine was also supposed to provide protection for U.S. allies in Asia, deterrence became somewhat deflated. As a result, the credibility of U.S. nuclear commitments was weakened. It has also been suggested that discussions of the doctrine gave vogue to the idea that
conventional arms were obsolete. In any case, the doctrine was quite short-lived, and a "new look" was on line by 1954. The "new look" policy was predicated on an October 1953 National Security Council document (NSC-162/2) which called upon the armed services to draw up future plans with the assumption that nuclear weapons could and would be used in limited war situations.

In Europe the "new look" would reduce U.S. conventional forces; the focus would be on nuclear weapons, both strategic and tactical. This new emphasis on tactical nuclear devices was hardly likely to encourage European governments to meet their chronically unfulfilled troop commitments, especially since short-range atomic weapons conceived in the Truman administration, were immediately available as a foundation for the nuclear focus. Tactical nuclear weapons were quickly deployed in Europe.

The "new look" would also dramatically increase expenditures on Intercontinental and Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs and IRBMs) armed with nuclear warheads. Budget outlays for these systems increased from $3 million in fiscal year (FY) 1953 to over $160 million in FY 1955. The earlier rhetoric had cooled somewhat, but the shift to increased reliance on nuclear forces had begun in earnest.

Following the lead of the United States, the North Atlantic Council in 1954 approved plans for NATO's Military
Committee to devise a strategy based on the first use of nuclear weapons. The Council acknowledged that the Lisbon force goals would not be met, and encouraged the use of tactical nuclear weapons as a means of redressing the conventional shortfall. The development of more accurate guidance systems in combination with lighter, smaller yield warheads increased the appeal of tactical weapons. Since the atomic cannon, and the Regulus, Honest John, Corporal, and Matador missiles had already been deployed on the continent, discussions regarding the new policy were rather academic. The debate that ensued, however, did propel the "nuclear sharing" issue to the forefront of Alliance policy formulation issues.

The new deployments reflected the administration's willingness to consider, both privately and publicly use of nuclear weapons in tactical roles. Dulles advised Eisenhower that the only effective defense of Quemoy and Matsu would entail the use of nuclear devices against mainland airfields. When asked by the press if the United States would use tactical atomic weapons in a general war in Asia, Eisenhower responded that they would be used, but only against military targets. The President hoped to use this public statement to convince the Chinese communists that America was determined to protect Western interests in the region. The primary role of nuclear weapons in the U.S. arsenal was still deterrence, but serious discussions
within the administration concerning possible tactical uses in Korea, China, and at Dien Bien Phu did take place.\textsuperscript{27}

Two months after the promulgation of NSC-162/2, President Eisenhower delivered his "Atoms for Peace" address at the United Nations. Designed to shock as well as persuade, the speech emphasized that unless international action was taken quickly, nuclear nations might soon lose the ability to control even their own development of weapons. "The development has been such," he said, "that atomic weapons have virtually achieved conventional status within our armed services."\textsuperscript{28}

Air Force Chief of Staff, General Nathan Twining proceeded on the assumption that all future wars would involve nuclear weapons. At a Congressional hearing he advised members of the Senate that a substantial reduction in defense spending could be made if U.S. policy shifted to a "new strategy built around the use of atomic weapons in war." The United States, he maintained, could not afford to finance both conventional and nuclear forces. The nuclear option was the only way America could field effective forces "within a reasonable standard of financing."\textsuperscript{29} Apparently the Senators were impressed; nearly half of the 1957 defense budget was allocated to the Air Force while expenditures for the Army's more conventional forces declined.

By 1957 "graduated deterrence" had become a dominant factor in America's military policy. In case of armed
conflict, American leaders would now be provided with a wider range of options on both the conventional and nuclear levels. The strategic nuclear stockpile would be held in reserve. Responding to new advances in Soviet technology and to Russian "missile rattling" during the 1956 Suez crisis, the U.S. proposed strengthening the deterrent by the deployment of state-of-the-art IRBMs and the establishment of nuclear stockpiles in Europe. The weapons would be controlled by the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, that is, by an American. The British had already agreed, on a bilateral basis, to deploy the missiles, but other allies exhibited generally negative reactions to the proposal. In order to gain acceptance of the new deployment plan it was necessary to include a concurrent proposal, suggested by the British, to hold simultaneous arms reduction talks with the Soviets. The opposition to Eisenhower's IRBM proposal, made possible in large part by the strengthening of Western Europe's economic and social structure which had occurred by 1957, signaled the end of America's ability to dictate allied nuclear policy.

U.S. policymakers also found their nuclear policies being influenced by other elements apparently beyond their control. In 1951, Secretary Acheson had commented that maintenance of the American military position required the military to "constantly search for, and find, new weapons
and new techniques in the air, at sea, and on the land."  

During the first four years of the Eisenhower administration the proliferation of new military techniques and hardware was astounding. As a military officer, Eisenhower had been comforted by methods that were "tried and true;" as president he faced the disquieting situation in which a new slogan held sway, "if it works, it's obsolete." Despite reservations concerning the progress of military science, however, he was forced to concede, "no longer could we afford the folly, so often indulged in in the past, of beginning each war with the weapons of the last."  

As new technologies came on-line American policymakers in both the administrative and legislative branches became obsessed with military hardware. Technological advances by the Soviets created an imagined "bomb gap" in the mid-1950s, and by the end of the decade, the U.S. faced the notorious "missile gap." Sputnik made headlines; almost unnoticed was the historic Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 during which the Soviets announced a policy of peaceful coexistence, acknowledged that war was not inevitable, and renounced the oppressive tactics of Josef Stalin.  

For Eisenhower, military technology had become an issue of prime importance, and by the end of his presidency he had come to realize that, increasingly, political decisions were being dominated by military considerations, and military policies had become the slave of unbridled technology. His
final address to the nation warned:

In the councils of government we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

A second admonition cautioned that

...in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.33

His warnings were probably too late.

Robert McNamara and John Kennedy --
More is Better

The policy of "graduated deterrence" had evolved simultaneously and somewhat symbiotically with related theories proposed by academicians on both sides of the Atlantic. Limited nuclear war was becoming fashionable. Approaches to the study of this new fashion were varied. Herman Kahn, for example, envisioned a minimum of forty-four possible levels of conflict; twenty-four of them were above the nuclear threshold.34 Coming rather late in these studies, Henry Kissinger's Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy (1957) drew heavily on previous theories and became the most widely read treatise on the subject.

Conventional war, Kissinger wrote, would soon become "unnatural," and since war between nations which possessed
nuclear weapons would almost certainly involve their use, policies should be devised to ensure that nuclear exchanges take place on the less-than-total level. Limited nuclear war would never be truly desirable, but in the nuclear age it might offer the best alternative available. Limited nuclear war would be the Alliance's most effective strategy and utilize the West's "special skills to best advantage." Kissinger maintained that with proper tactics the destructive impact of tactical weapons might be held to tolerable levels. Of utmost importance, however, if the West wished to avoid disaster, the Soviets must not be allowed to use their nuclear weapons before NATO unleashed theirs. The Allies must be prepared to cross the nuclear threshold first.

Pronouncements of this type from Harvard professors were unlikely to send Kremlin leaders scrambling to their fallout shelters, yet Kissinger and many other apostles of limited nuclear war did influence the Kennedy administration substantially. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, a dominant member of the Kennedy cabinet, came to the Defense Department with very little military experience. His heavy reliance on several members of the Rand "think tank" assured the prospects that his policies, and through him, the policies of the President would reflect the recently popularized limited war theories. In a public interview which was printed in March 1962, President Kennedy left little doubt
that in the defense of Europe, "...come what may...we must be prepared to use the nuclear weapons at the start."
Kennedy also made it clear that tactical nuclear weapons would play an important role, "...what is important is that if you use these weapons you have control of their use. What you need is control, flexibility, a choice...."  

The "first use" policy described by Kennedy and subsequently by several members of his administration was certainly not new. The emphasis placed on the policy, and the public manner in which it was enunciated, however, did influence Alliance thinking. It may also have substantially altered relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Soon after the Kennedy interview, Communist Party Chairman Nikita Khrushchev commented, "Your president has made a very bad mistake for which he will have to pay. He has said that you will be the first to use the bomb."  

"First use" was one element in Kennedy's overall strategy of "flexible response." Like "massive retaliation" much of "flexible response" consisted of new rhetoric used to express old ideas. In at least one important area, however, the new policy was a substantial departure from that of previous administrations. While delivering the commencement address at the University of Michigan, Secretary McNamara revealed that U.S. strategy in general war would "be approached in much the same way that more conventional operations have been regarded in the past." More specifically,
American nuclear forces would concentrate on the "destruction of the enemy's military forces, not of his civilian population." Since this new "counterforce" strategy was based on the assumption that in order to be effective, U.S. missiles which were launched must strike unlunched Soviet missiles, McNamara's Ann Arbor speech added credibility to the "first strike" posture.

Another important element essential for "flexible response" was a substantial increase in conventional forces stationed in Europe. McNamara believed that additional troop deployments were especially critical following France's withdrawal from the integrated force structure in 1967. Congressional concern that the newly proposed deployments of tactical nuclear weapons would lower the nuclear threshold were countered by administration claims that deployment of additional ground troops would raise the threshold to its former level. In December 1967, the NATO Council officially embraced a defense strategy based on "a flexible balanced range of appropriate responses, conventional and nuclear, to all levels of aggression or threats of aggression." The expenditures necessary to increase conventional forces substantially, however, again failed to materialize. In fact, President Lyndon Johnson "temporarily" withdrew a total of twenty thousand troops from Europe between 1967 and 1968. U.S. tactical forces were increased 60 percent during the
Kennedy years, and had doubled by the time Lyndon Johnson left office.

The continued reliance on nuclear weapons in general, and tactical weapons in particular, can be attributed in some part to the pressures placed on American conventional forces by the Vietnam war. European reluctance to contribute more troops to NATO's defense, however, was based on arguments -- usually unstated, but always prevalent -- which had become as entrenched as the Alliance's bureaucracy. The cost of fielding conventional forces was prohibitive, especially when compared to the economic firepower provided by nuclear weapons.

Many Europeans also believed that stronger conventional forces would raise the nuclear threshold and weaken the credibility of the U.S. nuclear deterrent. In 1965, German Minister of Defense Kai-Uwe von Hassel made the European position clear; while "flexible response" might become official Alliance policy, it "must not be interpreted to mean that the so-called atomic threshold can be raised unduly high...." The Alliance, he asserted, must be prepared to wage war with a large range of atomic weapons. 44

As the 1957 IRBM decision had demonstrated, Europeans were becoming increasingly uneasy about U.S. dominance of nuclear decisions within the Alliance. The Kennedy administration attempted to assuage these fears by assigning
nuclear armed Polaris submarines to the NATO command. The weapons on these submarines, however, were still controlled by the United States. Great Britain was equally unwilling to allow its nuclear forces to be controlled by other Allies. Eventually, the nuclear sharing issue would be a major factor leading to the French withdrawal from the unified command.

Secretary McNamara was determined to retain veto power over the use of American nuclear weapons by the Alliance; if U.S. weapons were to be used against Soviet forces, American permission would be required. But McNamara opposed the creation of separate nuclear forces which would be produced and controlled by each Alliance member. In 1965, West Germany pushed for inclusion of U.S. missiles, designed to counter the latest deployment of Soviet state-of-the-art IRBMs, within the structure of the proposed nuclear Multilateral Force (MLF). The Germans envisioned these sea-based missiles as a "new, primarily European component of the deterrent." The United States had originally proposed the creation of the MLF, in rather vague terms, but as discussions of specific issues leading to MLF implementation proceeded, opposition arose from a variety of sources. The U.S. Congress revived its traditional opposition to nuclear sharing, Britain expressed serious reservations, and France
objected to inclusion of West Germany in the proposed force. Many officials in the Kennedy administration also had second thoughts, and the MLF proposal was permanently placed on a back burner.

In its place the United States proposed the creation of a new NATO committee which would formulate Alliance nuclear policy. Although many Europeans believed that the proposed consultative approach to nuclear sharing provided a very poor substitute for the MLF's plan, a policy group was formed and soon evolved into the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG). Given the more formal structure in which to influence Alliance decisions, the Europeans (minus France which did not participate in the NPG) could push even harder for improvements in NATO's nuclear force posture.

Considerations of a technical nature also created pressures on the Americans for additional deployments. A number of weapons systems designed for tactical use had been initiated under the Eisenhower administration; when these systems came on-line, the U.S. had nowhere to deploy them except Europe (and perhaps Japan or Korea, although rationales for substantial Asian deployments seemed rather shallow). Echoing Eisenhower's concern, McNamara complained, "we are borne along by the accelerating pace of science and technology."46
Policymakers assuming their responsibilities in the administration of President Richard Nixon were confronted with technical data which was bound to discourage even the most stout-hearted. "Counterforce" strategies were abandoned—in fact, they had been discarded during the Johnson administration—but the Soviets had amassed a missile force large enough to kill over 50 million Americans from the immediate effects of a second strike. Soviet ICBM guidance systems could now consistently deliver warheads to within six hundred meters of their target; an essential component of U.S. strategic forces, the underground Minuteman system, was threatened by a new technology. 47

Lead times for building advanced, highly complex weapons systems of the 1970s averaged five years, compounding defense planning problems. 48 The Nixon administration's contribution to nuclear doctrine, "strategic sufficiency," was based on plans which targeted both civilian and military facilities in the Soviet Union. Implementation of the doctrine, however, was to prove very difficult. Operational plans "by the time they were developed had been overtaken by advances in technology." 49

Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger explained the new "strategic sufficiency" doctrine in terms which veteran
members of Congress had heard many times before. The new strategy was designed to "introduce flexibility" and to offer the President a large number of "options" in case of an attack on the United States or the Alliance. The Secretary suggested that the new strategy might even be carried out using existing weapons systems. Assuming the Soviets undertook selective attacks on American land-based ICBMs, "strategic sufficiency" would provide operational plans so that the President could respond in a manner which would not elicit a massive counterstrike against U.S. population centers. The proposed targeting doctrine, "selective response," would add to deterrence by making U.S. policy more credible. In essence, "strategic sufficiency" was a plan for waging a limited nuclear war on the strategic level.

A growing sentiment in Congress to reduce military spending was reflected in President Nixon's first budget proposal which called for a cut of $5 billion from the previous year's military expenditures. In real terms, defense spending consistently decreased during the Nixon years. Conventional forces were to feel the brunt of the new budgetary trends. U.S. military personnel levels during Nixon's first term fell from 3.5 million to just over 2.2 million. Seven hundred thousand American troops were redeployed from foreign assignments back to the United States. The majority of those reassigned were taken from Asian theaters, but the redeployments and reductions
adversely affected further attempts to persuade European governments to increase their conventional forces.

Two changes in policy allowed the drastic cuts in American conventional forces. Before the Nixon administration, American military planners believed that the United States should be prepared to fight two wars simultaneously in Europe and Asia. The President proposed a one and one-half war fighting option which allowed conventional forces to be maintained at a substantially lower level. A related policy initiative, the "Nixon Doctrine," also contributed to this trend. The doctrine, apparently proposed in an innocent attempt to provide reporters with a bit of journalistic fodder on a slow news day,\textsuperscript{53} offered the employment of a nuclear umbrella as protection for friendly Asian nations. For their part, Asian governments would be expected to provide for their own conventional defense needs. This restatement of the Dulles assurances to provide U.S. nuclear deterrence in Asia again diluted the credibility of strategic deterrence in the eyes of the Europeans.

Nixon's adviser on national security matters warned, "we are in danger of sliding into a period of relying on massive retaliation even though this is absurd." Urging a reassessment of administration policy, Kissinger continued, "Our general purpose forces* must be looked at...they are the way we are seen by our allies—they are the contact
and the reality." The formation of America's all volunteer army convinced many Europeans that U.S. troop levels would remain low for a considerable period of time, and many Europeans used its formation to justify their refusal to deploy additional conventional forces.

On the official level, the Nixon administration endorsed retention of the main principles of NATO defense plans: deterrence based on a wide spectrum of capabilities, a continuation of the "flexible response" doctrine, and maintenance of the forward defense strategy.* A new assessment of Soviet conventional force levels, made by the Americans, pointed to the possibility that a relatively small increase in European forces would be sufficient to balance the conventional equation on the continent. The Europeans, however, were still concerned that too strong a conventional force would undermine the credibility of strategic deterrence.56

Privately, U.S. officials in both the State and Defense Departments were uneasy with NATO defense strategy. While the European Allies insisted on a guaranteed early use of tactical weapons, they were understandably reluctant to have them detonated on their own territory. Americans within the military planning structure preferred a policy which would establish a clear line of demarcation, a firebreak, between the use of conventional and nuclear weapons. Disputes arose in the NPG during 1969 as Europeans, led by
British Defense Minister Dennis Healey, insisted that NATO ground troops could only hold against a Soviet attack for a matter of days, and that early use of tactical nuclear weapons was an essential element of any defense strategy. Members of the NPG finally agreed that the use of tactical nuclear weapons would be a part of NATO's defense policies but no specific plans for their use were formulated. Upon his return from the NPG meeting Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird reported to the President that the traditional gulf between U.S. and European views of Alliance strategies was as wide as ever.57

That gulf found expression in Henry Kissinger's revealing comment regarding European defense strategy:

Their secret hope, which they never dared to articulate, was that the defense of Europe would be conducted as an intercontinental nuclear exchange over their heads. 58

Undoubtedly, part of the problem lay in the fact that what the United States considered tactical, Europeans viewed as strategic, and what concerned America on the strategic level could be examined tactically in Europe. Perhaps the secret hope of American planners was that they could use Europe as a battleground on which to challenge the communist threat.

Another aspect of the problem stemmed from the inability of Alliance members to formulate specific plans regarding the actual use of tactical nuclear weapons. Since disputes
on the doctrinal level were nearly constant, specific planning was impossible. Laird, Schlesinger, and Kissinger all expressed dismay that concrete nuclear warfighting plans did not exist. On at least three occasions the President publicly called for a resolution of the problem which was posed by the existence of seven thousand tactical weapons in Europe with no effective plans to use them.  

Although relatively few American tactical nuclear systems were introduced into Europe during the Nixon/Ford administration, development and testing continued. A new artillery round with greater range and more adaptability was produced. General Andrew Goodpaster, commander of NATO forces, urged that funds be made available for its deployment. Noting that "artillery is normally employed in close proximity to the front line," Goodpaster stated that the shell would provide a command advantage against "time-sensitive targets."  

This statement was most disquieting for those members of Congress who were concerned with keeping the nuclear threshold as high as possible, for weapons which are designed to be used quickly and are stationed close to points of possible enemy attack are precisely those which are most likely to be used to cross the demarcation line between conventional and nuclear war. Expressing the fears felt by some of his colleagues, long-time veteran of armed forces affairs, Missouri Senator Stewart Symington commented, "the
more you lower the kilotonnage of these weapons, the more you disperse them...the greater the chance of their going off and the world blowing up.”

Development of the new shell proceeded.

General Goodpaster's call for small yield, more accurate warheads was also answered by development funds appropriated for the Pershing II missile during the Nixon administration. The Pershing II with more than ten times the accuracy of the older model, Pershing I-A, met NATO’s requirements well. Another system, perhaps even better suited to Alliance needs, was beginning to make its way into the U.S. tactical nuclear arsenal through a rather circuitous route.

In 1971, Congress had given the Air Force $10 million for development of a Subsonic Cruise Armed Decoy (SCAD) missile. The small vehicle was relatively inexpensive and possessed an intermediate range capacity. It would be launched from B-52 bombers and fulfill a dual role of confusing enemy radar and carrying an explosive warhead. By 1973, progress on the decoy mode was satisfactory. The Air Force, however, had refused to proceed with the development of the vehicle in the armed mode. Members of Congress protested, but the Air Force continued to ignore the dual nature of SCAD. The reason for this intransigence was not difficult to determine. Used in the "stand-off mode" the missile could be launched from a bomber, penetrate enemy airspace, and act as a strategic delivery vehicle. SCAD would perform
the same function as the proposed B-1 bomber, and the
Air Force was not willing to jeopardize its manned bomber
program by proceeding with the smaller, much less expensive
craft. 62 Heads of each of the armed services were reluctant
to accept new strategies that threatened their "procurement
enterprises." 63

Concurrent with Air Force development of SCAD, the Navy
was testing its Strategic Cruise Missile* (SCM), a missile
very similar to the SCAD. Since the SCM was to be launched
from submarines, it possessed little utility as a decoy.
Naval research on the proposed weapons system centered on
advances in guidance technology. A terrain profile matching
system would distinguish the Navy's cruise from those
that had come before it by providing it with remarkable
accuracy.

Although neither the Air Force nor Navy programs for
the proposed cruise missiles were initiated with the intent
of producing a land based system, the ground launched version
of the Navy's Tomahawk SCM would eventually be deployed by
the Air Force and play a prominent role in NATO's nuclear
modernization program. Development of specific military
plans for the Tomahawk's use, however, would lag far behind
the technology that had created this new class of weapon.
Conclusion

From the beginning of the atomic age, U.S. policymakers have been confronted with questions for which there appeared to be no satisfactory answers. A few U.S. officials, like George F. Kennan, were quick to note the dangers inherent in the reliance on atomic weapons which he believed were "an infirm and questionable element in our military posture." Soviet developments in the atomic field seemed to make suggestions that the U.S. abandon its nuclear programs unrealistic. Deep mistrust and ingrained animosity between the two major powers tended to preclude policy options which might have helped control the early proliferation of nuclear weapons systems. Each new technology was perceived as a threat to the precarious balance which soon came to be based on theories of mutual and massive destruction. As the possibilities for viable options, which had been few to begin with, decreased, morbid results ensued. In 1965, the Pentagon estimated that assured destruction would be achieved if U.S. nuclear forces could kill one-fourth to one-third of the Soviet population. Three years later, successful mass destruction was defined as one-fifth to one-fourth of the population killed.

In the United States, fears of Soviet technology became manifest in a strange and remarkably persistent form,
"gapmania." Each new surge in technology was matched by another, and each new administration, unable to come to grips with the basically insoluble dilemmas it faced, demanded that it be given more flexibility, more options with which to control the increasingly dangerous situation. In most cases the options and flexibility were provided by the next group of weapons to come on-line.

In the Western nations, increased reliance on nuclear weapons was accelerated by the refusal of Alliance leaders to finance relatively expensive conventional forces. The defense policy of each American administration called for increases in both nuclear and conventional forces, but except for the initial NATO deployment made by the Truman administration, no substantial increases in ground troops were made.

As American reliance on military hardware grew, U.S. foreign policy became myopic; Soviet-American relations increasingly came to be viewed in military terms. Certainly the unnecessary rhetoric and inflexible ideologies of both East and West contributed to additional tensions, but the core of the superpower confrontation became the race for superior weapons technology.

Situated between the two great powers, Western Europe could hope to remain on cordial terms with both heavily armed giants, but when threatened by the offspring of strategic nuclear policy, Europe too had learned to run for
help into the ever-expanding arms of technology.

In 1977, as the new administration in America surveyed the international scene, respected and influential statesmen in Western Europe called for actions to redress the apparent imbalance which had been created by Soviet deployment of its newest intermediate-range missile, the SS-20. Thirty years of programs designed to assure maximum policy flexibility would provide Jimmy Carter with a large variety of military options.
FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid., pp. 754 and 375.


5. Ibid., pp. 31-33.


8. Acheson, Creation, p. 488


15. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

16. Ibid., pp. 30-50.


22. Acheson, Creation, p. 519.


27. Hoopes, p. 208.


29. Osgood, p. 222.


31. Acheson, Balance, p. 27.

32. Eisenhower, Mandate, pp. 458 and 446.


36. Ibid., p. 176.

37. Ibid., p. 183.
38. Ibid., p. 178.


43. Text of Final Communiques, 1949 - 1974 (Brussels: NATO Information Service, no publication date given) p. 197.


45. Ibid., p. 212.

46. McNamara, University, p. 65.


51. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Briefing on Counterforce Attacks, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Arms Control, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974, pp. 7 and 24.


54. Ibid., p. 399.


57. Ibid., pp. 218-220.

58. Ibid., p. 83.


60. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Research and Development and Committee on Armed Services, Joint Committee Hearings on the Military Posture, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974, p. 3948.


CHAPTER II

STRATEGIC PARITY AND THE THEATER NUCLEAR THREAT

The weapons development programs which President Carter inherited from previous administrations included the cruise missile (in its various forms), the Pershing II, and the Enhanced Radiation Weapon (ERW), also known as the neutron bomb. All could be categorized as tactical systems, and all would play a major role in the debates on modernization of NATO's intermediate-range nuclear forces.

Carter's natural propensity, however, was to refrain from deploying any of these systems. Commenting on the size of the superpowers' arsenals, he maintained:

It was always obvious that both nations had far more weapons than would ever be needed to destroy every significant military installation and every civilian population center in the lands of its potential enemies.

Carter was committed to reductions in nuclear stockpiles.1

Soviet strides toward strategic parity in the early 1970s did not bode well for this commitment, but other events during the first half of the decade had offered some hope that reductions would be made in the area of theater nuclear weapons* (TNW). Pressures for a reassessment of Alliance nuclear policy had sparked debates concerning not only the level of forces involved, but also the viability of NATO's tactical nuclear strategy.
Some analysts believed that a large increase in the numbers of tactical weapons in Europe, together with a sharp reduction in their explosive yields would strengthen the Alliance. Two Los Alamos scientists, R.G. Shreffler and W.S. Bennet, suggested that a force of 50,000 to 100,000 small-yield weapons should be deployed. On Capitol Hill, however, there was a growing sentiment that many of the warheads already stationed in Europe should be removed.

Early Debates

During Senate hearing in the spring of 1974, Paul Warnke, who had served as Assistant Secretary of Defense, noted that the initial deployments of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons, made in the "primitive days of nuclear strategic thinking," had been "automatic and unreasoned." He believed that the "deterrent purpose of tactical nuclear weapons could be served by something like several hundred." Another defense analyst, also a former Assistant Secretary of Defense, Alain Enthoven asserted that "tactical nuclear weapons cannot defend Europe; they can only destroy it." Enthoven testified that the useful purposes of tactical nuclear weapons could be satisfied with a total of one thousand warheads.

The growing concern over U.S. tactical nuclear policy was codified by the "Nunn Amendment" which was contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of 1974. In its original
form, the amendment provided that the total number of tactical nuclear warheads in Europe could not be increased except in the event of imminent hostilities. In the final statute this freeze provision was limited to a period which would expire on June 30, 1975, approximately one year after the enactment of the bill. Other provisions of the amendment became law in their original form.

The new statute called on the Secretary of Defense to make a study concerning a "reduction in the number and type of warheads which are not essential for the defense structure for Western Europe," and to study "the overall concept for use of tactical nuclear weapons..." The Secretary was also instructed to take steps to develop a "rational and co-ordinated nuclear posture" for the NATO alliance. Findings of the Secretary were to be reported to Congress by April 1975.5

The report mandated by Congress was prepared by Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, and presented an outline of Alliance nuclear policy in broad terms. The Secretary's report noted that tactical nuclear weapons were a critical component of NATO's deterrent posture. The weapons also acted as a hedge against the possible failure of conventional forces. Theater nuclear forces (TNF) could serve to deter conventional attack by preventing the massing of enemy units. They added to the credibility
of the overall nuclear deterrent by providing nuclear weapons which, because they could not reach Soviet territory, offered "a perceptively lower risk of escalation than the use of strategic nuclear forces." The report concluded that in limited numbers TNWs could also "serve the political purpose of showing NATO's resolve."6

The report emphasized the need for the Alliance to maintain a high nuclear threshold; conventional forces would have to be strengthened. If the threshold had to be crossed, however, TNFs would be a critical element in the attempt to avoid escalation in a war against Soviet forces which were prepared to wage a European conflict with "theater-wide, large-scale nuclear strikes."7 Of special importance to future debates on the deployments of modernized TNFs was Schlesinger's observation that parity on the strategic level placed added emphasis on the deterrent role of conventional and theater nuclear forces.8

This theme formed the basis of West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's remarks concerning Alliance nuclear policy in his October 1977 address to members of the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS). While the majority of his address examined essentially non-military aspects of security—economic development, access to raw materials, and social justice—the primary result of his comments was a revitalization of debate on NATO's theater
nuclear policies. The speech linked superpower strategic parity to arms control agreements and explained the significance of this linkage to European security.

Schmidt observed that the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) "codifies the nuclear strategic balance," and in doing so neutralized the Soviet and American strategic arsenals. "In Europe this magnifies the significance of the disparities between East and West in nuclear tactical and conventional weapons."\(^9\) While Schmidt was careful to point out that further arms control negotiations between the superpowers were important to world security, he warned that "we in Europe must be particularly careful to ensure that these negotiations do not neglect the component of NATO's deterrent strategy." He further cautioned that strategic talks confined to the superpowers would "inevitably impair the security of the Western European members of the Alliance... if we do not succeed in removing the disparities of military power in Europe parallel to the SALT negotiations."\(^10\)

It may be argued that the Schmidt speech set a new, reinvigorated peace movement in motion, that it seriously strained Alliance cohesion, and that it caused the "mortal wounding of his own government."\(^11\) At the very least, the October address increased U.S. policymakers' sensitivity to the European perspective on the tactical nuclear balance.
and focused public attention on the issue of TNF modernization. This new public focus would eventually be an important factor in the complex intra-alliance debates and negotiations on modernization and deployment of the cruise and Pershing II missiles. American officials had hoped to conduct an appraisal of the Alliance's tactical nuclear requirements "out of the limelight, free from the pressures generated by intense public interest and scrutiny. After the Schmidt speech this was no longer possible."  

The Alliance Evaluates the Threat

The military disparities which Schmidt had addressed in his October speech were references to the deployments of the Russians' intermediate-range missile, the SS-20, and of their newest bomber, the Backfire. In the opinion of many Western defense analysts, both systems represented quantum leaps in Soviet TNF strength. According to some analysts the Backfire and SS-20 "placed at risk every significant military and non-military target in Western Europe." The mobile, solid fuel SS-20 was a vast improvement over the stationary, bulky, liquid fuel SS-4 and SS-5. The new system's accuracy was four times that of the older models, and its range, according to some estimates, would allow it to hit NATO bases in Iceland and the Azores. The SS-20 launcher could be reloaded, allowing for a
sustained military campaign, and each missile contained three independently targeted warheads.

Within the Alliance's formal structure evaluation of the threat posed by the Soviets' new weapons, and debate concerning appropriate allied responses would take place primarily in the newly created High Level Group (HLG). The HLG had been formed as an outgrowth of NATO's Long Term Defense Program (LTDP) which had been outlined in directives issued in May 1977. The most highly publicized component of the fifteen year LTDP was the commitment of member nations to an annual increase of approximately 3 percent in each of their defense budgets. The exact requirement of the real term increase (i.e., the increase after inflation was taken into account) had been intentionally formulated in vague terms, but most NATO officials agreed that increases of less than 2.8 percent would not meet the requirements.

The LTDP was designed to redress chronic Alliance shortcomings which "cut across almost every key area of military concern, from command and control, logistics, force structure and deployment, to readiness and reinforcement capabilities." The last item listed on the LTDP list of ten "actions areas" was theater nuclear force modernization, and in October 1977 the HLG was created to study this specific area of Alliance nuclear policy. The group's agenda was set by Pentagon officials who proposed four broad avenues of possible action.
The first option suggested was to make no overt response to the Russian deployments. A second option would be the deployments of additional, modernized battlefield nuclear weapons which would not be able to strike at Soviet territory. The third choice presented was the emplacement of a modest long-range theater nuclear force (LRTNF)* in Western Europe, and the final American proposal envisioned a massive LRTNF development capable of both counterforce and countervalue strikes against the Soviet Union.

In February 1978, the HLG made its preliminary determination. The "no response" option had been quickly rejected, as members agreed that the new Soviet threat had to be countered. The group consensus was that the Soviet Union must be the target of any new NATO deployment. One Alliance official noted, "the Poles are not enemies, they are victims." Since battlefield weapons could not damage targets on Russian territory this option was abandoned. Proposals for the installation of large numbers of LRTNFs were rejected on both political and military grounds. The HLG maintained that too large a force stationed in Europe would have the effect of decoupling the U.S strategic nuclear force from NATO's defense structure. A large deployment would also be likely to prove provocative not only to the Soviets, but also to Western European elites who were seeking detente with the East. The initial recommendation of the eleven nation
HLG would be for a modest deployment of missiles capable of threatening Soviet territory. The Pershing II and Ground Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM) would soon emerge as the prime candidates to fill the role prescribed by the HLG.

Large segments of the allied defense establishment perceived the high technology of the cruise missile as the optimum solution to a wide variety of problems. President Carter wondered if the expensive B-1 bomber would be a wise investment; "was there a better alternative? Yes there was! A swarm of cruise missiles, once launched, could not be intercepted..." Carter's enthusiasm for the application of cruise technology focused on the strategic level, the Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM). In Europe, however, "military planners were fascinated" with the possibilities of the cruise used in tactical applications. For the most part, officials at the high levels of the Carter administration believed that European enthusiasm for the cruise was misplaced. THE GLCM would probably be considerably more expensive than originally estimated, and the land-based system would complicate arms control negotiations with the Soviets. But while American representatives to the Alliance were trying to convince London and Bonn that the GLCM had "only limited application for NATO," the Department of Defense was attempting to persuade Congress that a high priority should be placed on the ground launched
version of the cruise. By the time the final HLG decision on GLCM deployment was made in 1979, General Dynamics, the prime contractor for the system, would be conducting tests (apparently on its own initiative) to study the feasibility of using the GLCM as a reconnaissance vehicle and as an unmanned attack aircraft. Given the strong support for the GLCM in Europe and in the American defense establishment, it was almost certain to be selected as part of any TNF modernization. Selection of the Pershing II as part of the new force, however, was considerably more in doubt. The limited range of the Pershing under development would not meet the criteria set forth by the HLG.

Development of the advanced Pershing had been initiated in an attempt to implement the Alliance strategy of "flexible response." Studies had been initiated in the late 1960s to determine what types of systems would best enhance NATO's theater nuclear posture. One study, conducted by the sole source contractor for the Pershing I, concluded that an updated model of the Pershing would do the job nicely. The new Pershing would have the same maximum range as the Pershing I-A, approximately four hundred miles, but warhead accuracy would be increased substantially.

In February 1970, Martin Marietta, the Pershing contractor, submitted an unsolicited proposal for the development of a potentially highly accurate radar directed guidance
system. A year later the initial contract for radar development was awarded, and in January 1972 the Army granted a $10 million contract to Martin for advanced development of the guidance system. The Pershing II first appeared as a separate defense budget line item in 1974, and Congress promptly reduced funding for the new reentry component of the system on grounds that Congress doubted the need for a European deployment and that if the system were to be used, the United States should not bear the total cost of the project. Since the Army had already awarded Martin a $19.8 million contract for further development (without prior Congressional approval) no momentum on the project was lost.

Over the next several years, Congress, having been "repeatedly reassured that the Army was not building a new strategic weapon," continued to fund development of the new missile system. During Senate hearings on the FY 1978 budget the Pershing project manager insisted, "there is no change in the range...a conscious decision was made to retain the four hundred mile range." Although new propellants and improved propulsion components could be used to increase the Pershing's striking distance, the director noted that retaining the old range "avoids the political implications inherent in a longer range system which can strike targets in the Soviet Union." As it became more apparent that a theater nuclear modernization requiring longer range systems would
take place, however, those implications were set aside, and in 1979 the "extended range" Pershing II system became a candidate for the new NATO deployment.

The Military Equation

Other systems were in contention for deployment, including several ballistic missiles with considerably longer range than the Pershing II, but the focus of debate within the Alliance between the February 1978 decision and the initial deployment nearly six years later centered on a more fundamental issue. Was any modernization of NATO's TNF structure necessary or desirable? Arguments took place within two broad categories, military needs and political considerations. Arguments over definitions and the accuracy of statistical data added to the complexity of the military debates.

Proponents of the deployments contended that "the growth of Soviet military power has been relentless", and that increasingly Moscow was fielding a global military threat. A simultaneous decrease in Western military expenditures, especially in the United States, was creating an "increasingly dangerous military imbalance" which combined with growing instability throughout the world raised "profound doubts about the prospects of the members of the North
Atlantic Treaty."\(^{30}\) Both NATO and Central Intelligence Agency reports indicated that real growth of Soviet military spending averaged 4 to 5 percent annually, and it seemed clear to those backing the TNF modernization that Moscow was expending far more for its military than was required for defensive purposes alone; Soviet intentions were offensive in nature.

Strategic parity between the superpowers made the growing Soviet threat even more ominous, especially in the European theater where "disparity in the medium-range potential is gaining greater and greater significance."\(^{31}\) With its increased accuracy, the SS-20 was viewed by some as posing an extreme offensive threat; since the new system possessed a counterforce capability against Western Europe it endangered all of the Alliance's land-based nuclear systems.

Opponents of the LRTNF deployments countered that Europe had been living in the shadow of the SS-4 and SS-5 for twenty years, that estimates of the accuracy of the SS-20 were exaggerated, and that the older Soviet missiles presented "a threat not qualitatively different from that posed by the SS-20."\(^{32}\) Some argued that the SS-4 and SS-5 had been targeted against major European urban areas not as an offensive threat, but in an effort to deter American strikes against the Soviet Union, and that the modernized
system was intended by the Soviets to perform the same function. Those opposed to the NATO deployments noted that Moscow's tendency to build a military structure which far exceeded its defensive needs was deeply rooted in the Russian tradition, and that, far from being novel, had been the standard operating procedure for the Tsars. In 1979 a Senate report indicated that some NATO officials believed that the TNF problem was primarily political and psychological. One veteran NATO diplomat contended, "because we did not dismiss the SS-20s as useless overkill typical of Soviet practice, we are now unable to ignore them."

In response to the claim that strategic parity exacerbated the problems associated with the theater imbalance, deployment opponents maintained that for practical purposes, strategic parity had existed for many years. Noting the long standing tendency of Alliance military planners to exaggerate the strength of Soviet armed forces, they questioned the accuracy of data which indicated that Moscow was outpacing the West in military expenditures. Not only was the overall military balance unlikely to tip toward the Soviets, but critics of the cruise and Pershing II cited evidence that there was nuclear parity within the theater. The widely respected yearly report of the International Institute of Strategic Studies commented that in 1979 it would certainly require some very major displacements of the figures to show any substantial
imbalance in terms of overall system utility. It is even doubtful in our view whether the adverse ratio in terms of the total number of warheads assumed to be deliverable is significant at present. Proponents of modernization substantiated their claims with the same IISS report which also noted that if current trends continued the Soviet bloc would begin to build a lead in theater nuclear systems.

The effect of the SS-20 and Backfire threat would be increased by further operational deployments of the shorter-range SS-21, SS-22, and SS-23, and development of Warsaw Pact nuclear artillery. Supporters of NATO's modernization plan noted that against this array of relatively new equipment the Atlantic Alliance was fielding hopelessly out-dated forces. The backbone of the Alliance's land-based theater forces, the F-111 aircraft, had first been deployed in 1967, and advances in Warsaw Pact air defense systems made this delivery system, and the even older Vulcan bomber, extremely vulnerable in flight. Because these aircraft were tied to easily identifiable airbases they were also susceptible to surprise counterforce attacks. As for land-based intermediate-range missiles, NATO had none.

The mid-range arsenal appeared little better suited for opposing a Soviet attack. The only Alliance missile with this range was the Pershing I-A which had been deployed in the 1960s. Although the old Pershing was somewhat mobile, it suffered from various drawbacks. Because of its relatively
inaccurate warheads—a circular error probable* (CEP) of twelve hundred feet—it would not be very effective weapon against hardened targets. This inaccuracy combined with the large yield of its warheads also meant that the collateral damage caused by a Pershing I-A strike would make the missile’s use impracticable in many of the situations expected to be encountered during a battle in the European theater. In effect, proponents of the highly accurate cruise and Pershing II maintained, the Pershing I-A was self-deterring. The same could be said for the short-range battlefield weapons in the Alliance’s nuclear arsenal. NATO’s military planners would be reluctant to fire these weapons because the high-yield warheads on these systems could cause a great deal of unnecessary damage, quite possibly to areas which they were intended to defend.

Aircraft accounted for over 85 percent of NATO’s mid-range forces, and except for approximately sixty carrier based planes (less than 5 percent of the total) all were based at easily located sites. F-104 and F-4 aircraft together comprised over three-fourths of NATO’s mid-range air force, and had been originally deployed in 1958 and 1962 respectively. The vast majority of the Alliance’s other planes had been brought to Europe in the mid-1960s.

No NATO aircraft, even in the longe range forces, could match the striking distance of the SS-20, which the IISS
estimated at four thousand nautical miles, and although the seven thousand warheads held by Allied forces in Europe seemed an impressive number, two-thirds of them were components of delivery systems with a range of less than one hundred miles. Proponents of TNF modernization contended that many of the Warsaw Pact's mid-range weapons, which outnumbered NATO's by nearly three to one, could not be attacked by comparable Allied systems. In sum, excessive yields, low accuracy, lack of proper reach, and increasing vulnerability indicated that the theater nuclear balance was heavily weighted against the Allies.

Critics of the possible NATO deployment armed themselves with statistics which included additional forces in the intermediate-range inventory. Their tallies included the 128 British and French Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM), the eighteen French land-based IRBMs, and the four hundred warheads contained on the forty-five American SLBMs assigned to the Allies (i.e., targeted to NATO specifications) in their computations of theater forces. Thus, they maintained, NATO possessed a formidable arsenal of missiles capable of reaching Soviet territory. In any case, they pointed out, the problem of sanctuary for the SS-20 could not be solved by either the GLCM or Pershing II since both had a range of less than half that of the Soviet missile. Concern over the vulnerability of aircraft
assigned to a theater nuclear role was also addressed by reference to the highly mobile, relatively invulnerable SLBM force.

According to some opponents of the proposed deployments, smaller, more accurate warheads on already existing short-range and medium-range forces would dispel any self-deterrent difficulties. Others contended that the heavy reliance on TNFs which would be created by the new systems would, itself, act as a self-deterrent since the possibility of escalation would increase substantially if the modernized intermediate-range systems were ever actually used.45

On a more fundamental level, opponents resurrected the traditional argument that the Alliance had no clear tactical nuclear doctrine, and that the new technologies of the cruise and Pershing II would simply be a superfluous addition to "a conglomerate of an arsenal which has proved to be impractical and probably almost suicidal."46 Many within the Alliance believed that from the standpoint of warfighting ability, the suggested LRTNF modernizations represented an expensive redundancy.

Deterrence and Escalation

Supporters of the new TNF systems were convinced that the cruise and Pershing II would give added strength to the
long-standing Alliance strategy of "flexible response." By filling in some of the gaps between short and long-range nuclear systems the improved missiles would add vitally needed strands to the "seamless web" which had been envisioned by the Military Committee in 1967. This would ensure that defensive actions could be taken at levels appropriate to the scale of the enemy attack. Allied forces would be fully prepared to respond to any enemy escalation or be in a better position to initiate escalation if necessary. 47

The chairman of the Bundestag Defense Committee noted, "Moscow must at all times be forced to reckon with the full ladder of escalation." 48 By adding rungs to NATO's graduated escalatory ladder, the Alliance could confront the Soviets with a full continuum of forces and enhance the credibility of the Allies' deterrent threat. 49

Should deterrence fail, the added threat posed by the cruise and Pershing II would aid in preventing the Soviets from crossing the nuclear threshold, but should this firebreak be crossed, the "flexible response" doctrine maintained that at each higher level of escalation NATO should possess forces which would allow them to control the situation by ensuring that further escalation would not prove advantageous to the enemy. Western military planners had long assumed that NATO would always be in the position of "escalatory
control" in any European conflict, but there was now some concern that the SS-20 would give the Soviets escalation dominance. Proponents of the modernization argued that with the balance of forces currently available, NATO's use of theater weapons would probably leave the Allies in a worse position than the Soviet Union.

Loss of escalation dominance would severely undercut the credibility of the Alliance's warfighting capabilities and further weaken the West's overall deterrent posture. While one of the essential elements of the new deployment would be to ensure the coupling of TNFs and the central strategic force of the United States, the supposition that the new weapons would actually be used in the event of war was also critical, because "the essence of deterrence is that he who wants to deter a conflict must be prepared to wage it."

For those attempting to stop implementation of the HLG recommendations, the ability to conduct a nuclear conflict heightened the probability that one would take place. Building up military forces in an attempt to establish controls on escalation tended to make escalation more likely. Klass de Vries, a Dutch legislator and one of the most outspoken critics of TNF modernization, pointed out the dangers of NATO's "excessive preoccupation with limited war scenarios." To many observers, these scenarios
seemed detached from the probable realities associated with a European war. Theoretically limited nuclear war might make sense, but "prospects for these limitations working out in actual war appear to be very low, because it would be extremely difficult for either side to determine whether restraints were being maintained." Many who opposed the cruise and Pershing II were convinced that once the distinct non-nuclear to nuclear firebreak was crossed, further escalation became inevitable, and that in real war situations the distinction between tactical and strategic weapons would disappear.

Installation of the Pershing II would prove particularly worrisome. In case of a crisis the forward-based Pershing, which could reach command facilities located on Soviet territory in less than six minutes, might induce Russian military planners to enact a launch-on-warning policy, increasing the possibilities of inadvertent escalation. Should a crisis become severe, Soviet fears of the Pershing II might take the form of a pre-emptive strike. The likelihood of such a response would be increased by Soviet awareness that the Pershing II was scheduled to replace the Pershing I-A in NATO's Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) force. Consequently, a high percentage of the new missiles would be available for launch on very short notice.
The increased accuracy and limited yield of the proposed weapons would also act to lower the nuclear threshold by blurring the distinction between conventional and nuclear armaments. Opponents of the modernization believed that "by lowering the perceived consequences to NATO of nuclear first use, and increasing the Soviet's expectations that their nuclear systems will be preemptively attacked," the Alliance was substantially lowering the nuclear threshold.57

In efforts to prevent the TNF deployments, some members of the Atlantic community argued that the new missiles would actually serve to decouple U.S. strategic weapons from the defense of Europe. Rather than acting as a visible sign of support, they might be perceived as a substitute for strategic weapons and increase the possibility of the superpowers waging a nuclear war exclusively on European territory. If regional forces were balanced, war could be waged on a regional level without recourse to strategic weapons.58

Many opponents of the LRNTF systems agreed with the advocates of the deployments that the Alliance needed to maintain a strong deterrent force, but insisted that resources expended for deterrence would be better spent on conventional forces. They consistently pointed out that stronger conventional forces would present NATO commanders with a wider variety of effective actions within
the range of options below the nuclear threshold. Deterring conflict by increasing military capabilities was a policy of dangerous contradictions, especially on the nuclear level. The only nuclear systems which would effectively deter were those which might reasonably be used to wage war. The more likely they were to be used, the lower the nuclear threshold.

Conventional Levels

Proponents of TNP modernization were quick to point out that from its beginnings, NATO had relied on nuclear weapons to balance Soviet superiority in conventional forces. While plans formulated for implementation of Alliance strategy had frequently called for increases in ground troops, active ground troops in the European theater had declined some 88,000 since the implementation of "flexible response" in 1967, while Soviet forces had increased by 154,000. In 1977, NATO statistics indicated that Warsaw Pact troops outnumbered Allied forces by 925,000 to 777,000. The Soviet bloc could field 25,000 tanks, NATO only 9,900.

Advocates of the cruise and Pershing deployments estimated that in realistic scenarios, the Warsaw Pact would be attacking with a two-to-one or three-to-one (some estimated as high as five-to-one) ground troop advantage. "NATO could not resist a concerted Soviet conventional offensive for more than several days." Long-range nuclear
forces could offset this discrepancy without causing any collateral damage to Allied resources if used to interdict second and third echelon forces behind enemy lines. The cost of the entire LRTNF deployment would be a reasonable $4 to $5 billion for the first ten years of the program. Given the current recession, Allied governments were not likely to make any substantial increases in conventional force levels.

NATO officials backing the new missile systems also noted that the GLCM and Pershing would actually increase the Alliance's conventional forces by making aircraft which had been assigned to nuclear attack roles available for use in conventional modes.

Deployment opponents questioned the wisdom of such a heavy reliance on nuclear weapons and disputed claims that NATO could not stage an adequate conventional defense. "We have exaggerated the Warsaw Pact so much for so long," commented Alain Enthoven, "that we assume, without even making the assumption explicit, that our forces would be overrun and defeated." While it would be difficult for NATO to emerge as an outright winner in conventional conflict, Allied forces could deny the Soviets a quick victory and engage Warsaw Pact forces in a war of attrition where the "West's resources and technology could be used to best advantage."
Adversaries of the TNF modernization also contended that the reliability of Moscow's allies should be taken into account when comparing force levels, because even the "Kremlin strongly suspects—especially after the 1980-1981 events in Poland—that the East Europeans who constitute half of Warsaw Pact forces would turn against Moscow in any protracted war."^66

New technologies might also make effective conventional defense less expensive. Fewer troops could achieve the same results using a variety of Precision Guided Munitions* (PGMs) which were becoming available to the Alliance. Soviet strategy, based on the use of high speed armored units unsupported by infantry and artillery, would be especially vulnerable to PGM attacks.^67

As for claims of the high economy of the proposed LRTNFs, deployment critics noted that both the GLCM and Pershing II were still in development and testing, and that if early results were any indication, large additional expenditures would be required before the systems became dependable. In September 1981, the Department of Defense estimated that the cost of the Pershing II system would be $1.8 billion; three months later it revised its estimate to $2.8 billion.^68

NATO commander General Bernard W. Rogers predicted that a Soviet attack against conventional Allied forces deployed at 1983 levels would have to be countered quickly by nuclear
weapons. He commented, "We have mortgaged our defense to the nuclear response." Substantial numbers of those supporting the LRTNF modernization cautioned that conventional forces would also have to be strengthened; many who were attempting to prevent the new nuclear deployments were convinced that whatever amount was appropriated for the GLCM and Pershing II would be better spent on conventional forces.

Conclusion

European initiatives during the first year of the Carter administration created pressures within the Alliance for programs to offset improved Soviet delivery systems. In the United States, Congressional leaders over a period of many years had been examining America's commitment to the North Atlantic Alliance, but in 1974 these appraisals began to focus on the posture of theater nuclear forces in Europe. This new focus, together with the European initiative increased the demands on the administration to address the theater nuclear issue. Within NATO, the nuclear consultative structure was expanded to examine the specific issues raised by the new debate.

American influence in the newly formed HLG was extensive. Its chairman was an American, and much of its agenda was provided by the U.S. Department of Defense. Less than five months after its creation, the HLG made its preliminary
proposal on TNF policy. U.S. weapons systems which had been in the development pipeline for nearly a decade would provide the hardware with which to implement the decision.

The debates over the military aspects of the proposed deployment were complex and lengthy. Nearly two years elapsed between the HLG's first recommendations and acceptance of a TNF modernization by the North Atlantic Council. It is clear that no definitive answers regarding the military necessity of the new systems emerged during this period, yet the Carter administration would have to make a determination on the deployment plan.

For although all fifteen nations in the Alliance provided input into the discussion, the final decision on production of the new systems rested in Washington. Any European country could refuse to deploy the modernized forces, and several did, but the program could still be implemented. If the United States chose to boycott the program, the deployments would not take place.


4. Ibid., p. 74.


7. Ibid., p. 169.

8. Ibid., p. 168.


10. Ibid.


17. Ibid.

18. Carter, pp. 82-83.


20. Ibid.


24. U.S., General Accounting Office, Comparison of the Pershing II Program with the Acquisition Plan Recommended by the Commission on Government Procurement, January 1977, p. 16.

25. Ibid., pp. 16-17.


27. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

28. Ibid., p. 28.


32. Gregory F. Treverton, "Nuclear Weapons and the 'Gray Area'," Foreign Affairs 57 (Summer 1979): 1007.


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37. Ibid., p. 28.

38. Record, p. 45.

39. Paine, p. 27.

40. Record, p. 31.


43. Record, pp. 5-6.

44. Committee on Foreign Relations, SALT and the NATO Allies, p. 19.


47. Toward a New Defense for Nato, p. 199.

48. Vardamis, p. 98.


50. Toward a New Defense for Nato, p. 29.

51. Ibid., 202.

57. Paine, p. 31.
58. Committee on Foreign Relations, SALT and the NATO Allies, p. 5.
59. Record, p. 16.
60. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, NATO and Western Security, a Report of Staff Study Mission To NATO Countries, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980, p. 70.
64. Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe, p. 76.
CHAPTER III

THE THEATER NUCLEAR THREAT AND
POLITICAL COHESION

Prior to the High Level Group's preliminary determination in February 1978, debates on LRTNF modernization had been confined primarily within the Alliance governments, NATO itself, and the various quasi-official Alliance organs. As public awareness of the neutron bomb debate increased, the entire question of theater nuclear modernization took on added political significance. After the April 1978 decision to defer production of the enhanced radiation bomb was made, public attention shifted to the cruise and Pershing II "Euro-missiles." It was within the context of an increasingly heated public debate that the Carter administration examined the TNF options.

Pressures for deployment were also building from within the American bureaucratic structure. After many years of planning and development, both the GLCM and Pershing II were systems seeking a mission. Congressional inquiries in 1978 and 1979 indicated quite clearly that neither missile had been designed as part of an overall theater strategy, and that Department of Defense TNF proposals were not part of any integrated plan, "but instead consisted of a menu-like array of program choices without identifying a cohesive management plan for structuring our theater nuclear... programs."
If the Carter elite had been convinced that the cruise and Pershing II deployments were essential to Europe's defense, they could have chosen these two items from the "menu." In fact, however, they were convinced of just the opposite.

No Military Necessity

As the Europeans who favored the modernization pressed their case early in 1977, officials in the highest levels of the Carter administration voiced their reservations concerning the military necessity of the new missiles. Although the President discussed the possibility of revamping the U.S. nuclear force in Europe, he proclaimed that these forces were "fully adequate." Carter maintained that European defense was a top American priority, but emphasized that improved conventional forces would be the focus of U.S. defense efforts. With the advent of strategic nuclear parity, he said, "the role of conventional forces in deterrence of war is increasingly important."²

Both Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who noted that "substantial improvement in our conventional defense in Europe is long overdue,"³ and National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who emphasized "enhanced allied capabilities for conventional warfare,"⁴ agreed with the President's emphasis. Repeating patterns set in past debates,
the dichotomy between the U.S. focus on conventional deterrence and the European reliance on nuclear deterrence was becoming apparent.

The American accentuation of conventional strategy was increased by some administration officials' concepts of tactical nuclear war. During his confirmation hearings, Cyrus Vance said that he doubted there could be a limited nuclear war using tactical nuclear weapons. Secretary Vance believed that the Allies should "forgo speculation about the possibilities of fighting a so-called limited nuclear war--speculation that only increases the risk of conflict." When asked if any nuclear exchange could remain limited, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown responded, "I, for one, have very serious doubts that one could."

When Europeans expressed fears that a protocol to SALT II might inhibit deployment of the GLCM, Secretary Vance had difficulty understanding their concern, "since at the time we had no plans to deploy them." Brzezinski noted that there had never been a nuclear balance in Europe and that NATO had survived many years of Warsaw Pact superiority in Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF). Eventually, however, Carter, Vance, and Brzezinski all supported the HLG's plan, and all supported it for the same reason. Zbigniew Brzezinski commented, "initially, I was doubtful that a military response based in Europe was needed, but I was convinced by my staff...of the political necessity to deploy
a European-based nuclear counter."¹⁰

The Neutron Bomb and Leadership

The political need for the cruise and Pershing II deployments was greatly magnified by the Allies' inept handling of the neutron bomb controversy. Scientists at Los Alamos had been lobbying for the production of an efficient ERW for many years, and in 1973 development of a new device began. President Gerald Ford had authorized construction of the new weapon, and there is some evidence to suggest that neither President Carter nor Defense Secretary Brown was aware that $42 million had been authorized for the device in Ford's last budget.¹¹ The bomb would effect the same radiation kill as a standard fusion weapon which had a blast yield ten times that of the ERW.

In July 1977, President Carter had tentatively authorized continued development of the ERW, but a series of Washington Post articles which had started a month earlier sparked a public protest, and the President began to question his initial decision.

The lead article in the Post series implied that the government was attempting to hide the ERW program from public examination by developing the device with Energy Research and Development (ERDA) funds. The article's headline set the tone for a good part of the article, "Neutron Killer
Warhead Buried in ERDA Budget." Consequent media portrayals "sensationalized the debate which followed," and European press services quickly internationalized the public discussions. While administration officials viewed Moscow's contribution to the debate as a purely propaganda weapon "for obfuscating the issue of their own deployment of the huge fifteen thousand kiloton SS-20," the Soviet press was able to contribute to the glare of publicity which was growing around the neutron bomb.

"The public uproar made production and deployment of the weapon a test of the administration's will to carry out its stated intention to strengthen NATO's defense," and advisors urged the President to take a hard line on the issue, to produce the weapon, or at least to use it as a bargaining chip in negotiations on the SS-20. The President was hesitant; he did not wish to be viewed as an "ogre." More accurately, he did not wish to be viewed as the only ogre.

Despite Carter's misgivings, however, Vance, Brzezinski, and Brown carefully proceeded to lay the groundwork for eventual deployment. A growing rift between the Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser, and an apparent lack of clear communications between the President and his top advisors complicated the decision process. By the end of 1977 the ERW debate had become a test of the alliance's ability to make hard and politically sensitive decisions. Worse,
for many Allies, the issue was becoming a test of the President's ability to lead the Alliance.17

Worse yet, American delegations sent to persuade the Europeans to accept the ERW were presenting the proposal as if it had been formulated by the President. President's advisers "had underestimated the degree of Carter's reluctance to deploy this new weapon."18 By March 1979, the European Allies and, apparently, the government of the United States had agreed to announce plans for production of the new weapon. It would also be announced that the production would be abandoned if the Soviets would agree not to deploy any more SS-20s. If negotiations toward this end did not succeed within two years, the neutron bomb would be stationed on the European continent.

Carter was apparently not aware that Allied plans had progressed so far. Barely a week before the formal announcement of agreement was to be made, he received a memorandum detailing the Alliance proposal. The surprised President wrote in his diary,

They had generated a lot of momentum, including an immediate agreement for me to produce these neutron weapons. My cautionary words to them since last summer have pretty well been ignored, and I was aggravated.19

A meeting of the administration's top foreign policy advisers was quickly convened on March 20, 1978.

Carter was angered by the European's refusal to express their support for the neutron bomb in public. He
was annoyed by Bonn's insistence that Germany would never deploy the ERW unless another continental Ally also agreed to do so. He insisted that he would not approve production "unless the Germans publicly committed themselves to deploy." Vance, Brown, and Brzezinski were all shocked, and strongly urged that the President make a positive decision on ERW production. Vance later noted that the President "appeared not to appreciate the enormous damage to his prestige and U.S. leadership that would result" from a negative decision. Brzezinski warned the President that backing out would stamp Carter as weak, and advised that "leadership means making the decisions which the Europeans are not prepared to make."

Carter listened to his advisers, but was not moved. At one point he commented, "I wish I had never heard of this weapon." He would not be forced into bearing the political burden alone. He informed his staff to postpone the Atlantic Council Meeting scheduled to announce the decision, and advised Vance to notify the Allies that production would be deferred until the Europeans were prepared to submit a firm, public request for the new warheads. At subsequent meetings with Vance and Brzezinski, the President held firm, and on April 7, 1978, the public was informed that the neutron bomb would not, for the time being, be produced.
The Carter decision to predicate American production of a weapons system on a prior European commitment for its deployment was unprecedented in the history of Alliance nuclear policy formulation. It did, however, set the pattern for later discussions on the GLCM and Pershing II. From the President's viewpoint, "although some confusion was generated within the NATO Alliance," the deferment decision was the proper one. Other administration officials contended that it represented a major setback in U.S.-European relations. Secretary Vance commented that the ghost of the ERW decision would "haunt subsequent Alliance consultations on the far more significant issue...of NATO's long-range theater nuclear capabilities." For some proponents of INF modernization it would be a very useful ghost.

The Credibility of America's Commitment

Following the neutron bomb debacle the political aspects of the TNF modernization assumed far greater significance. The deployment now represented in both concrete and symbolic terms "the community of fate that links the United States to Western Europe." That link had been severely strained, and agreement on the new weapons was needed to prove that the Alliance could "still summon the essential cohesion, relevance, and resolve to deal with fundamental security questions."
Atlantic cohesion was further tested as relations between Chancellor Schmidt and high level American officials, including the President, were strained. Zbigniew Brzezinski noted that Schmidt's "invidious gossip and derogatory asides... contributed greatly to the deterioration in American-German relations." President Carter believed that the Chancellor's persistent public criticism of the United States "helped to legitimize anti-American sentiment in Germany."  

In Bonn, Schmidt was confronted with a delicate political equation. The natural tendency of the left-wing of his Social Democratic Party was to oppose the stationing of more American missiles on European territory, while the minority party of the ruling coalition, the Free Democrats, believed that the deployment was essential to counter the SS-20. Schmidt apparently chose to deal with this difficult situation by generally supporting the deployment while expressing public criticism of President Carter and U.S. policies. Schmidt was also prone to equivocation on the TNF issue, and could at times, be perceived as opposing the modernizations. At one crucial juncture, he launched a trial balloon suggesting that a moratorium on the deployment of all theater devices be enacted. President Carter quickly rebuffed the Chancellor, adding fuel to the leaders' feud.  

On September 1, 1979 former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger delivered an address which simultaneously provided
advocates of TNF modernization with powerful ammunition, and delivered another shock to Allied confidence. As a private citizen, Kissinger maintained, he could say what he had not been allowed to say as Secretary of State. The U.S. strategic deterrent was a mirage. "We must face the fact," he said, "that it is absurd in the 1980s to base the strategy of the West on the credibility of the threat of mutual suicide." He further observed that our European allies should not keep asking us to multiply strategic assurances that we cannot possibly mean or if we do mean, we should not want to execute, because if we execute, we risk the destruction of civilization.

According to Kissinger, the military viability of NATO was in jeopardy, and one essential part of a policy to save the Alliance was the deployment of the new theater nuclear forces.

Kissinger's address, which opened a symposium on the future of the North Atlantic Alliance, contributed to lively conference debates. Problems relating to the military balance were examined, but much of the discussion centered on the political aspects of the proposed deployment. Some conferees portrayed the theater nuclear modernization "as a 'panicky' response to developments such as the neutron bomb fiasco and SALT II protocol." Some attending the conference maintained that Soviet internal problems would constrain Moscow's international behavior, but others, including NATO Secretary General, Joseph Luns, expressed concern that if the threat posed by the SS-20 were not met
promptly, Europe would be open to political blackmail.\textsuperscript{34}

The highly publicized remarks by Kissinger elicited quick responses from top level American officials. Within a month both Brzezinski and Vance had delivered public statements confirming America's unequivocal "commitment to defend Europe with all the means necessary—nuclear and conventional," and pointing out that "the substantial forces we have deployed to Europe are one concrete evidence of that commitment."\textsuperscript{35}

Similar sentiments were expressed in a September 1977 speech by McGeorge Bundy, a leading opponent of TNF modernization. He noted that the 300,000 U.S. troops stationed in Europe, not nuclear weapons, were the firmest proof of America's commitment. As for strategic assurances, Bundy asserted that the American guarantee did not rest on the number of warheads available to NATO, but rather on the ability of the Alliance to present a "wholly unacceptable and innately unpredictable risk to the other side."\textsuperscript{36} The Alliance's strategic protection would be "as strong or as weak as the American strategic guarantee no matter what weapons are deployed under NATO." Bundy also observed that any American missile which could reach the Soviet Union would undoubtedly be regarded by Moscow as a strategic weapon. American leaders, too, would have to regard them as strategic.\textsuperscript{37}
This last point was important in arguments presented by a number of deployment critics who contended that the GLCM and Pershing II were actually strategic missiles. The LRTNFs, therefore, would have no utility in filling the gaps in NATO's continuum. Some American observers were especially concerned that strategic weapons stationed so close to the possible area of battle could not be monitored and controlled as effectively as other strategic systems, and that in the heat of battle a local commander about to be overrun might launch the missiles under his command rather than have them captured by enemy forces. Some Europeans worried that the United States might be too ready to use its nuclear forces, but for the most part, the core of European government concerns lay in speculation that the American's would be unwilling to use their nuclear weapons at all. The basic issue on which the deployment decision would hinge was European confidence in America's leadership and commitment.

Detente and Confidence

In general, the policies of Jimmy Carter did not instill confidence in the NATO allies. The President's sense of mission in the area of human rights may have been successful in introducing a strong moral content into American foreign policy, but it "made many European leaders nervous." Carter left little room for compromise on this issue. "Our commitment to human rights must be absolute," he said in...
on foreign affairs he noted, "we can no longer separate the traditional issues of war and peace from the new global questions of equity and human rights.\textsuperscript{41}

The Carter initiative was welcomed in many parts of the world, but Western European leaders viewed it as "hopelessly naive" and a real danger to the process of detente.\textsuperscript{42} The continental Allies generally viewed cordial relations with the Soviet Union as an important goal and had no intentions of sacrificing the improvements in East-West relations made during the Nixon years for the nebulous benefits of improvements in human rights.

Moscow's response to Carter's criticisms of supressive activities in Eastern Europe and Russia was swift and intensely negative. In a February 1977 letter from Party Chairman Brezhnev to Carter, the Russian leader insisted that his country would not "allow interference in our internal affairs, whatever pseudohumanitarian slogans are used to present it."\textsuperscript{43} To illustrate this point, the Soviets quickly intensified the suppression of dissident elements in Russia. The human rights issue had an immediate effect on other Soviet-American relations. Secretary of State Vance had hoped to begin his first discussion with Chairman Brezhnev by outlining America's SALT position, instead, "Brezhnev immediately launched into a diatribe in which he catalogued alleged human rights violations in the United States."\textsuperscript{44}
Other elements of U.S. foreign policy contributed to the withering of detente. The December 1978 announcement that relations between the United States and People's Republic of China had been normalized was not received well in Moscow. Nor could public discussion of Presidential Directive 59 (PD-59) have given the Soviets any comfort.

Studies for PD-59 had been initiated in the summer of 1977, and the final document was apparently little more than a refinement of Nixon's "strategic sufficiency" doctrine. But press reports portrayed the new Carter strategy as the implementation of a counterforce, and therefore, a first strike capability. Secretary Brown denied that the "countervailing" strategy contained in PD-59 substituted military targets for civilian ones. The new targeting doctrine, he explained, was designed to "increase the number and variety of options available to the President in the event of Soviet attack at any level." The "countervailing strategy" would assure that any limited strategic strike by the Soviet could be matched in a "selective and measured way" while retaining enough weapons in reserve to still assure massive destruction of Russian civilian, industrial, and military targets. The deterrent aspects of PD-59 were emphasized by the administration, but increasing the number and variety of Soviet facilities targeted by American nuclear systems was unlikely to bolster sagging superpower relations.
The effect of PD-59 on detente was bound to have negative repercussions on European confidence in U.S. foreign policy, but another presidential document, parts of which were leaked to the press in August 1977, affected Allied relations more directly. Press reports indicated that Presidential Review Memorandum 10 (PRM-10) considered the possibility of abandoning the Alliance's forward defense doctrine and of using mobile defense strategies which would abandon the eastern third of Germany in order to defend the rest of it. The implications of this possible strategy linked to the use of tactical nuclear weapons were immediately apparent to the inhabitants of Hamburg and Munich. Reportedly, PRM-10 also dictated that American officials publicly remain committed to forward defense while secretly preparing to implement the mobile defense plan. The President quickly addressed a letter to the Atlantic Treaty Association in which he confirmed that "the United States remains categorically committed to NATO's strategy of forward defense." From the standpoint of Allied relations, however, much damage had already been done.

Increasing pressures outside the treaty area were also creating tensions within the alliance. Of particular concern was the secure supply of strategic materials such as titanium and cobalt. The securing of reliable supplies of oil had also taken on added significance since 1973.
U.S. military forces were the primary, and in some regions the only, guardians of the West's supply lines, and as the Soviets' global reach expanded, European doubt that the United States would effectively counter Soviet actions grew. On the other hand, U.S. officials had often complained that the Allies made far too small a contribution toward assuring global security.49

Partly as a response to Allied concern, but motivated primarily by events in Iran and Afghanistan, the President declared in his State of the Union address on January 23, 1980,

Let our position be absolutely clear: any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf Region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.50

Some Allies may have been reassured by the announcement of a U.S. commitment to defend the main source of European oil, but the "Carter Doctrine" must have reminded others of past American proclamations. "Massive retaliation" had extended the U.S. commitment to Korea and China; the "Nixon Doctrine" had reasserted the U.S. nuclear commitment to Asia. Now Carter would protect the Gulf region by "any means necessary." Each further commitment tended to dilute the overall credibility of the American posture and add to some Allies' doubts.

To some extent, every dispute, each action which increased Allied tension, intensified the level of debate
on the TNF modernization. Christopher Bertram, Director of the IISS, has pointed out that "whenever political relations are strained, this finds its expression in nuclear issues." During periods when European trust in American leadership wanes, the focus of disputes tends to be nuclear. It was during such a period that the Allies' decision to deploy the GLCM and Pershing II took place.

The Alliance Decision to Deploy

In October 1978, the HLG received a list of weapons options prepared by American planners. Besides the GLCM and extended range Pershing, it included the options of increasing the number of SLBMs assigned to the Alliance, or deploying the "Longbow," an IRBM in the early developmental stages. The "Longbow" was rejected because it would not be ready for production in time to offset the SS-20 threat. The HLG rejected the submarine-based system because it believed the deployment should possess a high degree of public visibility in order to enhance the credibility of response and increase its deterrent value.

After six months of deliberation the HLG presented its final recommendation to the NPG. The HLG recommended that at least two hundred missiles be deployed in order to counter the SS-20 deployment, but that no more than six hundred be deployed so that U.S. strategic forces would
remain coupled to Europe's defense. The HLG noted that the
deployment should take place in as many nations as possible,
and that the final decision on the modernization plan be made
by the end of 1979 in order to avoid complications in German
and American elections scheduled for 1980. The HLG
proposal noted that the GLCM and Pershing II would be visible,
survivable, long-range systems which would enhance the
Alliances "flexible response" posture.

In the United States, defense planners were in the
process of determining how many missiles should be sent to
Europe. The number finally agreed upon was 572, set near
the upper limit of the HLG recommendation to allow for
possible reductions requested by the Allies and to enhance
the U.S. bargaining position in negotiations with the
Soviets. On October 4, 1979 the HLG officially accepted
the American force level recommendation, sparking an
intense Russian reaction.

Two days after the HLG announcement, Brezhnev delivered
a major address in which he accused the United States of
attempting to upset the existing balance of power in Europe.
He contended that implementation of the HLG designs "would
change essentially the strategic situation on the continent."
Brezhnev warned that if the deployments took place, Moscow
would have no choice but to station more Russian missiles
in Eastern Europe, but he also offered to reduce the number
of Soviet INFs if NATO would forgo its TNF modernization. In addition, he announced the unilateral withdrawal of 20,000 Soviet troops and 1,000 tanks from the German Democratic Republic.  

The American response was consistent with the tenor of U.S.-Russian relations. Zbigniew Brzezinski believed that the Soviet proposal was "clearly a propaganda move" which did not address the specific question of SS-20 deployments. At a press conference three days following the Brezhnev speech, President Carter noted, "I think it's an effort designed to disarm the willingness or eagerness of our allies to adequately defend themselves," and that efforts should be made to "modernize the Western Allies' military strength and then negotiate."  

Both the President and Brzezinski had come to accept the deployment in large part because they believed that it would improve their negotiation posture at arms control talks with the Soviets. Many Allies agreed. The Special Group (SG), set up in April 1979 at the insistence of Germany and the Netherlands, was assigned the task of assessing the impact of TNF modernization on arms control negotiations. The SG concluded that no arms control agreements would be possible without the new deployments. They cited the history of the Anti-Ballistic Missile negotiations as evidence.
Other Allies insisted that the most likely outcome of the new LRTNFs would be counter-deployments by the Soviets, and that the "concept of developing systems as bargaining chips does not have a very convincing record." Six months after the final deployment decision was made, the Soviets did agree to negotiate on the INF question.

The possible impact which the deployment would have on arms control was examined in many forums. The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) noted that the GLCM would cause verification problems, and that the cruises' long flight path and ability to change direction might confuse enemy officials and provoke a response based on exaggerated estimates of the NATO attack. A report to the North Atlantic Assembly cautioned that European nations might build their own cruise missiles if the American systems were not deployed.

In an attempt to elicit support from the Dutch and Belgian governments, who were particularly troubled about the arms control implications of the deployment, the United States offered to remove one thousand nuclear warheads from Europe. The warheads were obsolete, and not configured to be used on delivery systems currently in NATO's inventory. More important than this gesture, however, was a proposal to link the modernization with increased efforts to negotiate controls on theater weapons. Some allies, suspicious of America's sincerity, termed the offer the "arms control
figleaf," but after extensive consultations, the reluctant governments were convinced that the American offer was genuine. With the acceptance of the "two-track" proposal—deployment combined with negotiations—Alliance consensus had been achieved.

The final decision was formalized at the December 12, 1979 meeting of the North Atlantic Council. The Alliance would deploy 572 weapons in West Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and, tentatively, in Belgium and the Netherlands. The Belgians and Dutch would delay a final decision on their deployments until they could observe what progress might be made in the proposed arms talks. The first missiles were scheduled to become operational by the end of 1983.

A unique element of the December 1979 decision was the provisions for command and control of the new systems. Negotiations on previous deployments had been complicated by European demands for added authority in the operational decisions associated with the new systems. No such demands were made for the LRTNFs. During HLG discussions, the German government had made it clear that they did not want the usual dual-key* system for the new missiles. The Germans apparently believed that Bonn's control, even the partial control in dual-key systems, would make closer relations with the East more difficult.62 England and Italy preferred American control for economic reasons.
Missiles entirely under U.S. command would have to be purchased, deployed, and maintained with U.S. funds. The GLCM and Pershing II would be stationed on American bases and operated by American crews. There would be no European finger on the long-range TNF trigger.

Conclusion

Sandwiched between the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, NATO's December 1979 decision to deploy 572 new missiles in Europe had little immediate impact on American public opinion, yet for the administration of Jimmy Carter, the decision marked one of the few high points in its relations with North Atlantic Treaty members. The decline of detente, the recriminations from the neutron bomb fiasco, and the personal animosity between the President and Chancellor Schmidt had all contributed to a loss of American prestige within the Alliance. To many, America's role as Alliance leader, already shaken by Vietnam and Watergate, had been weakened even more.

The European INF initiative was buttressed by large amounts of statistical evidence and testimony from respected military and political authorities from both sides of the Atlantic, yet President Carter and most of his top advisers were not convinced of the military need for the new long-range theater nuclear weapons. For practical purposes,
however, military arguments became unimportant. The prestige of the President, the credibility of the U.S. nuclear commitment, and the cohesion of the Alliance were at stake.

If Carter could not guide the Alliance toward a positive response to so apparent a threat as the deployment of the SS-20, many feared that America's influence within NATO would be greatly diminished. Posing a credible deterrent was, as always, a delicate task. During his term as British Defense Minister, Dennis Healy often noted that while a 1 percent chance of U.S. nuclear retaliation might be enough to deter the Soviets, a 99 percent chance might not be sufficient to reassure the allies.63

The GLCM and Pershing II had become symbols of reassurance, and for this reason the Carter administration chose to support their deployment. But for those opposed to the new systems, the December 1979 decision made by the North Atlantic Council was not final. The first missiles would not arrive in Europe until late in 1983; there was still one more round to be fought.
FOOTNOTES


15. Vance, p. 68.


17. Vance, p. 69.


20. Vance, p. 94.
21. Ibid.
22. Brzezinski, p. 305.
23. Ibid., 304.
32. Ibid.
34. Ibid., p. 9-10.
37. Ibid., 485.


42. Barnet, p. 366.

43. Brzezinski, p. 155.

44. Vance, p. 53.


54. Brzezinski, p. 308.


56. Brzezinski, p. 309.


59. Ibid., p. 42.


CHAPTER IV

THE FINAL ROUND -- A BOISTEROUS ANTI-CLIMAX

Those opponents of the theater nuclear modernization who believed that there was still some chance of stopping the deployments faced a formidable challenge. If the relatively moderate Carter administration had supported the TNF deployments, what chance was there that an administration which was proposing massive increases in the U.S. defense budget could be convinced that the modernization was ill-advised? If detente under Carter, and especially after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, had suffered, how was it likely to fare during an administration which publicly viewed the Soviet Union as an "evil empire?"

While the Carter White House emphasized the political advantages of the proposed deployment, the Reagan administration tended to regard production of the new systems in military terms. While Carter officials had recommended the deployment of 572 missiles with the expectation that fewer than that number would actually be deployed, President Ronald Reagan appointed as Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, a former Supreme Allied Commander who had complained that the number of missiles proposed was inadequate and represented "only political expediency and tokenism."\(^{1}\)

Despite the difficulties facing adversaries of the deployments, the numbers of "Euromissile" opponents willing
to take a public stand on the issue grew, and as the date for deployment neared the intensity of the protests increased. In the United States, the Reagan administration tended to characterize the protesters as well-meaning dupes of Soviet propaganda. In Europe the political survival of several regimes might rest on the "Euromissile" issue, and public dissent could not be dismissed so easily. If one major European government could be forced to change its position, the modernization effort would be in danger of collapse.

Leadership and Defense

Ronald Reagan's style exuded confidence, and the new administration soon made it clear that the President intended to lead the Alliance forcefully. A top aide to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger noted that one of America's biggest mistakes in recent years had been its willingness to conduct multilateral conferences on weapons development with the Allies. A visiting delegation from NATO's Special Group was informed by administration officials that Jimmy Carter "had gone too far in abdicating American leadership in Alliance nuclear policy," and that nuclear procurement would now be decided on a unilateral basis.

During his first year in office, President Reagan approved production of the neutron bomb without consultations.
with the Allies. The old process of decision making had quickly been reestablished. Several analysts have pointed out that European governments probably welcomed the return of the system in which they might avoid the "agony" of direct involvement in nuclear decisions. The exact manner in which Reagan's neutron bomb decision was presented, however, may have given some Europeans pause.

Following Secretary Weinberger's announcement that the United States would produce the ERW, the Pentagon released a statement which speculated that hundreds of the weapons might have to be used in Europe in the event of war. In general, Reagan and his top defense advisers displayed few qualms in discussing the possibilities of engaging in a limited nuclear conflict in Europe. Clearly, the new administration held a basically different view on the possibilities of fighting a limited war than did Carter and his advisers. Speaking to the press in October 1981, Reagan said, "I could see where you could have the exchange of tactical weapons against troops in the field without it bringing either one of the major powers to pushing the button." Reagan's defense analysts believed that a protracted nuclear war was a distinct possibility. Scenarios envisioned six months of nuclear exchanges between the superpowers, and the Pentagon was directed to devise plans to win such protracted nuclear conflicts. One element of those plans was
"horizontal escalation," a strategy which, according to Department of Defense officials, was designed to increase the flexibility of U.S. response to Soviet aggression. Secretary Weinberger explained the rationale behind "horizontal escalation:"

We might choose not to restrict ourselves to meeting aggression on its own immediately front. We might decide to stretch our capabilities to engage the enemy in many places, or to concentrate our forces and military assets in a few of the most critical areas.

The new strategy would rely heavily on a large increase in America's arsenal of sea-launched missiles. The new President had been given new options.

The additional missiles required to implement "horizontal escalation" were only a small part of the hardware which Reagan intended to add to the U.S. arsenal in order to help the defense establishment "recover from a decade of neglect." and his defense plans called for deployment of the MX, America's newest ICBM, the revitalization of the B-1 bomber program, and the addition of 37,000 warheads to the American nuclear stockpile. Funding for these programs would be provided by a somewhat reluctant, but generally obliging Congress. In November 1983, a month before the first GLCMs and Pershing II became operational, Congress passed a record $249.8 billion defense bill. U.S. defense expenditures in the year of the North Atlantic Council's decision to deploy, 1979, were $122.3
billion.+

Noting that the Soviet Union already had "their people on a starvation diet as far as consumer products are concerned," President Reagan challenged Moscow. "Do they want to meet us realistically on a program of disarmament, or do they want to face a legitimate arms race in which we're racing?" If the Soviets chose the latter course the President was confident that "we could go forward with an arms race and they can't keep up." ¹¹

Reagan's defense policies had a profound influence on the second track of the December 1979 decision. His abandonment of SALT II ratification left many Europeans uneasy. To some observers it appeared as if the Reagan administration was attempting to delay arms negotiations until the massive U.S. nuclear buildup was well underway, ¹² and administration rhetoric did not bode well for Soviet-American cooperation. According to the President, the Soviets were "the focus of evil in the modern world." ¹³ As for arms control, Reagan told the United Nations General Assembly, "Soviet aggression and support for violence around the world have eroded the confidence needed for arms negotiations." ¹⁴

During Senate hearings on his confirmations as Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger testified that the Soviet

+ Both figures in current dollars.
Union had opened a serious military gap between itself and the United States. According to Weinberger, the U.S. would have to start closing that gap before Moscow would be willing to take part in serious arms control negotiations. Negotiation through strength became the watchword of administration arms control policy. Reagan told the press that the American military buildup would lead to "more realistic negotiations because of what we can threaten them with." Carter's emphasis on the political necessity of the TNF deployment was replaced by the belief that the new weapons would provide "a vital link" between short-range nuclear forces on the continent and the intercontinental missiles in the United States. The precise role of the GLCM and Pershing II still appeared to be poorly defined, but some aspects of the new weapons seemed to be more clearly understood. President Reagan noted, "now what I call strategic, these theater weapons, they are in the theater of war, of potential war, but would be used strategically."

Critics of the approaching deployment had noted that the Soviet Union would almost certainly perceive no difference between a nuclear attack launched with tactical missiles that hit Soviet territory and one launched with strategic missiles. In a sense, Alliance planners acknowledged the strategic aspects of the cruise and Pershing II when they officially struck the "TNF" designation
from their lexicon. Theater nuclear forces would now be known as intermediate nuclear forces (INF), and long-range TNFs would be referred to as longer-range intermediate nuclear forces (LRINF). American officials noted that the change was made to reflect the scope of Soviet-American talks on INF issues, and to "dispell the idea that the U.S. viewed Europe as a 'theater' of nuclear conflict distinct from the United States." The coupling of American and European defenses was again reaffirmed.

A growing number of Europeans, however, were questioning the advisability of linking their defense to that of the United States. Strident anti-communist statements by the President, and Secretary of State Alexander Haig's hardline stand on Central America helped swell the ranks of groups opposed to the deployments. The U.S. invasion of Grenada would also enhance Reagan's "trigger happy" image. In defense of the President, one analyst remarked that Reagan's misfortune was that his "plain-spoken...folksiness" was lost on the Europeans and came across instead "as cold-blooded warmongering." A Senate report issued in 1982 noted that the Reagan administration "was not adequately sensitive" to European opinion, and that "its confrontational rhetoric aimed at the Soviet Union...added to grassroots anxiety in Europe." As the date for deployment neared, public
demonstrations of that anxiety would grow.

The Alliance Holds the Line

The Reagan administration’s anti-Soviet posturing undoubtedly increased the intensity of the European protests, but in the fall of 1980, even before Reagan had taken office, more than 250,000 protesters were marching in the streets of Bonn. A number of factors contributed to the strength of the "Euromissile" movement. The unique process of decision in which European governments were asked to confirm their support for production as well as deployment of new systems increased pressures on those governments and led to wider and more extensive debates. The cancellation of the neutron bomb was viewed as a victory by peace groups on both sides of the Atlantic and served to encourage further protests. The HLG decision to make the new deployments highly visible tended to increase public awareness of the issues involved, and a Soviet media blitz also helped to keep European attention focused on the TNF debate.

Many protesters doubted the sincerity of the Allies' commitment to the arms control component of the dual-track decision, and European peace activists were frustrated because their governments had no direct input into the bilateral INF negotiations. An article published in the spring of 1982 by four highly respected Americans, all
with many years of experience in government, maintained that the base cause of the dissent lay in the "enormously excessive nuclear weapons systems both in the Soviet Union and in the Atlantic Alliance."  

According to the article, the profusion of nuclear weapons had made it practically impossible to formulate rational plans for the first use of the nuclear arsenal by either NATO or the Warsaw Pact. The authors believed that no one has ever succeeded in articulating any persuasive reason to believe that any use of nuclear weapons, even on the smallest scale, could reliably be expected to remain limited.

Only one clearly defined firebreak existed, the one between nuclear and non-nuclear war. The authors called for an enhancement of Allied conventional capabilities. While admitting that some nuclear weapons would be needed as a deterrent force, they recommended the scaling down of NATO's nuclear systems and an acceptance of a "no first use" policy. The Alliance should publicly declare that it would not be the first to cross the nuclear threshold.

A counter-article, written by German officials, noted that the Atlantic Alliance had already renounced the first use of all types of weapons; NATO was a defensive alliance. The article maintained that renouncing first use of nuclear weapons would cripple the Alliance's deterrent, increasing the likelihood of war in Europe. While agreeing with the
Americans that raising the nuclear threshold by increasing conventional options was "urgently necessary," the German authors noted that "peace in Europe is inconceivable without the war-preventing effect of nuclear weapons." Should nuclear war break out, the article concluded, its effects would be limited by the realization on both sides that incautious use of nuclear devices would likely lead to uncontrolled escalation.

The no first use debate provided theoretical ammunition for both sides of the TNF modernization debate, but ultimately it would not be theory, nor military considerations, nor concerns over Alliance cohesion which would determine if the missiles were to be deployed. The final round of the debate would be decided within the context of domestic politics within the five democracies scheduled to receive the missiles.

Delegates from the British Labor Party addressing 150,000 "Euromissile" demonstrators in Hyde Park declared that England would not tolerate "annihilation without representation." In October 1980, the Labor Party adopted a resolution calling for the closure of all U.S. and British nuclear installations. While opponents of the TNF modernization might take encouragement from the Labor resolution, the fact remained that the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, with a comfortable parliamentary
majority, would make Britain's TNF decision. Prime Minister Thatcher's often stated position on the proposed deployments might well have been written by NATO publicists. The cruise missiles scheduled to be stationed near London, according to Thatcher, were a direct response to the Soviet SS-20. The responsibility for the Alliance's need to modernize rested squarely on Moscow's shoulders, and demonstrators should direct their protests accordingly. England was certain to continue its support for the new missiles.

The political situation in Italy, while chronically in a state of flux, also appeared favorable for the deployment. Although Italy's "Euromissile" movement was broadly based, consecutive Italian governments had supported the deployments. As demonstrations peaked in the final months before the deployment, all five parties in the ruling coalition officially distanced themselves from the protests. Even the Italian Communist Party was forced into taking a neutral stand when the Socialist Party, its main left-wing rival, made support of the new missiles a test of loyalty to the Alliance. Commenting on the size of the Italian demonstrations, Bettino Craxi, Prime minister at the time the first missiles were arriving in Europe, commented, "no opposition demonstration...could bring about a change in the line of conduct of the government fixed by mandate freely decided upon by Parliament."
In Bonn, the "Euromissile" marchers may have actually bolstered government support for the new TNF systems. Chancellor Helmut Kohl insisted,

We're going to see this through. In this country decisions are not made in the street....We're not going to shrink back when faced with force or violence. This is 1983, not 1932.37

Kohl, who headed a coalition government more firmly committed to TNF modernization than Schmidt's Social Democrats, had solidified his political position in March 1983 elections. Polls indicated at that time that the major concern of the German voter was economic stability, and that the "Euromissile" deployment was "a relatively minor issue."38 Hans Dietrich Genscher, who had served as Foreign Minister under Schmidt and who supported the TNF modernization, used the 7 percent showing of his Free Democrats to retain his post under Kohl. Continuity of support in this major government position helped ensure final acceptance of the deployment in the German legislature.

Within the German government, it was generally accepted that despite the vocal, and sometimes violent opposition to the cruise and Pershing II, a "silent majority" favored the deployments.39 Although the Social Democrats, whom Schmidt had led to initial acceptance of the modernization plans, overwhelmingly rejected the deployment at its November 1983 party convention, their political power had been substantially diminished by the March elections. The
"Greens," legislative candidates who opposed the "Euromissiles," had made a respectable showing in the elections, but their influence in the Bundestag's final decision would be far too little and too late. Germany would accept the missiles.

Acceptance of the cruise systems in Belgium and the Netherlands was far less certain. In both countries, a positive decision on the TNF deployment might well have brought about the collapse of the government. This was especially true in the Netherlands where a strong pacifist strain in the population, a well organized anti-nuclear movement, and a badly split coalition government with a majority of only four seats, combined to make the political atmosphere surrounding the TNF decision particularly tense. The governments in both countries decided to deal with their precarious situations by deferring their deployment decisions as long as possible. In effect, the postponements eliminated the Belgian and Dutch components in the overall debate on the initial deployments. Even if approved, missile deliveries to the Low Countries would not begin until 1986; in England the first cruise launchers would arrive in November 1983.
The United States and the Soviet Union: Propaganda and Proposals

On November 18, 1981 President Reagan publicly proposed that the total number of LRINFs in Europe be set at zero. If the Soviet Union would agree to remove the approximately 175 SS-20 launchers stationed in Europe, the United States would cancel the deployment of its cruise and Pershing II missiles. Not surprisingly, the Soviets objected to this "zero option" plan in which they would be required to remove their newest missile system in return for a promise from the President. Was the President's offer sincere? Many members of the anti-missile movement doubted it.

Four months later, Chairman Brezhnev proposed a unilateral moratorium on the positioning of Soviet missiles west of the Urals. President Reagan dismissed the proposal, in large part because SS-20s stationed east of the Urals would still be able to reach the major capitals on the European continent. Were the Soviets serious? American officials doubted it.

Both the Reagan and Brezhnev proposals fit a pattern which had been established during the Carter administration. Before the Carter presidency, arms control negotiations between the superpowers had been carried out in an atmosphere of "confidentiality...This had helped insulate the
talks from excessive political or ideological posturing." Carter opened the talks to close public scrutiny. Brezhnev and Reagan were able to refine the act of posturing to an art. Public proposals were met with counter-proposals; accusations led to counter-accusations. Was the President's July 1982 offer to raise the "zero option" to a ceiling of fifty SS-20s designed as a serious negotiating stance or a ploy to make the President's two track policy more credible in the eyes of skeptical West Europeans? The muddy waters of public arms control negotiations made it impossible to distinguish between propaganda and proposal.

In a rather bizarre public relations stunt the Soviets attempted to convince the West German press that the United States had introduced a new INF proposal which would limit the total number of SS-20s in both Europe and Asia to 120, and allow the British and French to retain their national nuclear forces. The Soviets were apparently attempting to discredit President Reagan by forcing him to reject a proposal which the Russians maintained had been presented by the American negotiating team. Putting such Byzantine endeavors aside, however, the Russians did present a series of threats and promises which, if taken seriously, should have caused the Alliance grave concern.

The most persistent Soviet threat was that of counter-deployment. Ranking Soviet officials, including the senior
member of the Soviet General Staff and the Warsaw Pact's Soviet commander, warned that unless Allied deployment plans were abandoned, new Russian missiles, capable of reaching West European targets in four to five minutes, would be stationed in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. A Moscow press report observed, "the almost 600 new [NATO] missiles which are to be installed are not so much new shields as...new targets." One Soviet official observed that the proposed NATO deployments would violate the Cuban missile agreement, thus opening the possibility of a counter-deployment in Cuba.

During a speech delivered in May 1981, Chairman Brezhnev noted, "in the seventies, Europe felt the taste of detente," but that detente was in danger, "primarily because of NATO's decision to deploy new American medium-range missiles in Western Europe." In maintaining that the TNF modernization would erode detente, the Soviets emphasized that the new missiles would have special effects on relations between West Germany and the East.

"Euromissile" opponents were particularly affected by Moscow's threats to break off arms talks if the INF deployments proceeded. As the date for implementation of the modernization plan drew near, Soviet statements on arms negotiations increased. The general line taken by the Russians was that cessation of negotiations, even if initiated by the Soviets, would be the result of American
intransigence. According to a Central Committee Deputy, deployment of the new systems would "completely undermine the basis of the current talks." 49

Russian efforts to influence public opinion in Western Europe proved to be a two-edged sword. While Soviet accusations that the NATO modernization would spark another round of the arms race and increase the likelihood of conflict were widely accepted by "Euromissile" activists, Alliance officials viewed Soviet pronouncements as dangerous. Soviet propaganda activities during the neutron bomb affair might have left the impression that Moscow was able to dictate Alliance policy. That impression had to be dispelled. 50 The more Moscow publicly pushed for a negative decision on the TNF deployment, the more pressure was applied on the Alliance to demonstrate its ability to counter Soviet influence. Once the initial decision to deploy was made in December 1979, the Alliance was in the position where cancellation of the deployment would indicate a lack of resolve.

Had a president who opposed the new deployments been elected to succeed Jimmy Carter, the TNF modernization plan might have been halted, although there would still have been considerable political pressure to carry out the deployments. When Ronald Reagan came to office, the deployment, for practical purposes, was assured.
Conclusion

The first missiles of NATO's modernized long-range nuclear force arrived at Greenham Common, just outside of London, on November 14, 1983. As similar deployments began in Germany a few days later, the Soviets reacted, and on November 23, 1983 they withdrew from INF talks which had been underway for two years. By the end of December, Moscow had also broken off negotiations on conventional force levels, and refused to discuss scheduling a new round of the SALT talks which had recently adjourned. Moscow announced that the Soviet bloc was in the process of reassessing its policy on consultations with the West.\(^{51}\)

American reaction to the Soviet withdrawals was restrained. Secretary Weinberger announced that he expected negotiations to resume within a matter of months.\(^ {52}\) By March 1984, however, senior NATO officials conferring in Brussels concluded that nuclear arms talks between the superpowers were not likely to take place in 1984.\(^ {53}\) In January 1984, Soviet sources confirmed that new deployments of SS-22s were taking place in East Germany. In February, Soviet Delta-class submarines moved to positions which would make their missiles' delivery times comparable to the Pershing II.

The beginnings of the NATO deployments did not signal the end of European demonstrations. Throughout the winter of 1983 and 1984 protesters in England and Germany
attempted to block the entrances of U.S. military installations. Although the Soviet Union had been put on the public defensive because of its decision to discontinue arms talks, opposition to the U.S. missiles did not abate.

The "hardline" followed by the Reagan administration on the military buildup assured continued U.S. support for the TNF deployments. For the most part, protest movements continued to be unable to exert sufficient electoral pressures to weaken European governments' support for the new systems. In Belgium and Holland, where the pressure was intense, the governments deferred decisions that might have brought a change of government. The way was clear for the stationing of the missiles in England, West Germany, and Italy. Despite continuing protests, the deployments would proceed.
FOOTNOTES


25. Bertram, p. 311.

26. Ibid., p. 313.


28. Ibid., p. 757.

29. Ibid., p. 764.


31. Ibid., p. 1159.

32. Ibid., p. 1161.


37. Ibid., 6 October 1983, p. 44.

38. Ibid., 7 March 1983, p. 6.


40. Ibid., 30 March 1984, p. 7.


42. Committee on Foreign Relations, *Evolution*, p. 68.


45. Ibid., 14 October 1983, p. 2.


49. Ibid., p. 32.

50. Schwartz, p. 224.


52. Ibid., 5 December 1983, p. 5.

53. Ibid., 30 March 1984, p. 2.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Like all historical events, the December 1979 decision to deploy modernized nuclear systems in Western Europe was comprised of components which mirrored past patterns and elements which reflected the unique circumstances of current events. As president of NATO's most powerful country, Jimmy Carter's special predilections were bound to influence Alliance policies, but long-standing precedents were also certain to play a major part in determining the course of the Alliance.

American policymakers throughout the nuclear age have noted the influence of technology's momentum on policy formulation. President Carter was determined to reduce the number of weapons in the world's nuclear arsenal, but as he took office a number of weapons systems, including the cruise, Pershing II, ERW, MX, and B-1 were well on their way to production and deployment. President Carter echoed the sentiments of officials in each of the previous nuclear age administrations:

New weapons systems are always being conceived. They pass through research, design, and testing, and then perhaps go on to deployment. This process can take as long as ten years, and once it gains momentum, it is almost impossible to stop.1

Carter attempted to stop production of the ERW and B-1; both systems are still being funded by Congress.
It seems quite clear that the tactical nuclear weapons in development in 1977 had not been assigned any clear mission by the United States Defense Department, but were examples of systems based on the availability of technology rather than on military or political need. There may well be a direct correlation between the availability of these and other new systems, to the tendency of each administration, from Eisenhower through Reagan, to devise strategies which offer the Commander-in-Chief more and more nuclear options.

Each increasingly flexible plan, from the "new look" to "horizontal escalation" was designed, in large part, to increase the credibility of deterrence; consequently, each new strategy was bound to leave the disquieting impression that policymakers were preparing to wage nuclear war when the deterrent failed. In the name of a more credible deterrence posture additional rungs were added to the escalating ladder, and as credibility increased the nuclear threshold fell.

Historically, U.S. attempts to make its nuclear deterrent more believable have been in response to Western European doubts. The European initiative for deployment of the new LRTNFs was based on the contention that filling the "gap" between strategic and short-range tactical forces with
longer-range tactical weapons would enhance the continuum of NATO's deterrent. Proponents of the INF modernization maintained that the new missiles would also serve to reestablish NATO's escalation dominance. Both assertions are incorrect and dangerous.

Neither the GLCM nor Pershing II can be considered tactical weapons. Both have the ability to strike Moscow and beyond, and there is little, if any, reason to suspect that Soviet leaders would view the warheads delivered to Russian territory by the LRINF systems any differently than those delivered by other strategic systems based in the United States or deployed on submarines. The missiles will not serve as an additional rung on NATO's escalatory continuum, because they are an addition to the already existing rung of strategic weapons.

Nor are the new systems likely to bolster NATO's ability to control escalation. Counter-deployments already started by the Soviet Union would preclude this possibility, but even if the Soviets did not intend to match the new Allied deployments, a supposition which would be most naive, the strategic importance of the missiles would act to "self-deter" U.S. use. From the American standpoint, use of the weapons during limited nuclear war would mean an immediate escalation to the strategic level.
The threat presented by the GLCM or Pershing II is only marginally more credible than the use of other strategic weapons in the U.S. arsenal. This marginal increase in credibility has serious implications for U.S. policy, because the increase is derived from the possibility of uncontrolled use. Land-based U.S. strategic systems are now stationed less than 160 miles from territory controlled by the Warsaw Pact. Should conventional forces overrun or surround these NATO installations, missile commanders would be faced with the prospect of having their weapons captured. The temptation to use them rather than lose them would be strong. In a very real sense, the new deployments link U.S. strategic weapons to Europe's defense; they do so by stationing U.S. strategic weapons in vulnerable European emplacements.

The missiles deployed in Germany also add to the probability of escalation by presenting the Soviets with a threat to their command positions. The highly accurate Pershing II can reach Russian territory in four to six minutes, and because flight characteristics make the GLCM difficult to detect on radar, the cruise may present an equally provocative threat from the Soviet military perspective. The pressures for launching a pre-emptive strike against NATO nuclear forces have increased substantially since the deployment of the Allies new INFs. The nuclear
threshold has been substantially lowered.

In a less direct way, the new deployments also lower the threshold by confirming the nuclear focus traditionally held by the European Allies. The pattern of reliance on nuclear systems at the expense of credible conventional forces has been repeated with the LRINF decision. During the debates on the modernization program, the long-standing tendency of Allied military planners to over-estimate the strength of Soviet military capabilities helped to enhance the perception that conventional defense against the Warsaw Pact was impossible. U.S. intelligence reports had indicated that Soviet military expenditures were growing, in real terms, from 3 to 5 percent annually from 1976 through 1981. In March 1983, revised estimates showed that the growth rate was closer to 2 percent a year.²

In military terms there can be no doubt that the Soviet SS-20 poses an additional threat to Western Europe. There should also be little doubt that the pace of technology is instrumental in the Soviets' choice of weapons systems. Missiles intended to replace the aging SS-4 and SS-5 would tend to be designed with the best technology at hand. Since this technology included multiple warheads, more efficient propellants, and better guidance systems, the SS-20 was bound to be a more effective weapon, and it was bound to elicit the same type of fear that earlier
bomb and missile "gaps" had created. It is safe to assume that the new technologies used in the GLCM and Pershing II are also a cause of great concern in Moscow.

Although many traditional elements were prominent factors in NATO's December 1979 decision, the consultative mechanism used within the Alliance was quite unique. European governments were required to accept more responsibility than they had in the past. New pressures, including increased public scrutiny, led to expanded debate on the proposed deployments. The potential military and political effects of the new systems were thoroughly studied in a variety of forums.

The initial American decision to support the new weapons was based almost exclusively on political considerations. Any criticism that the United States was swept along by military impulses and ignored the political implications of the deployments would have to be rejected. Yet it may be true that the United States did not give adequate consideration to the effects of the deployments on U.S.-Soviet and European-Soviet relations.

The Carter administration decided to use the new weapons as a political tool to strengthen a military alliance. The cruise and Pershing II would be symbols of America's commitment to the Allies. Some analysts have noted that "nuclear weapons are simply too terrifying a symbol for
Alliance cohesion, but in the nuclear age it is difficult to see what other effective symbol exists. Why this symbol should be a strategic system deployed near the front lines of a potential war zone is a question which apparently was not given adequate attention by Carter officials.

Recommendations

The United States government should give serious consideration to the removal of the newly emplaced GLCM and Pershing II systems from West Germany. The vulnerability and strategic importance of these systems make deployment in forward based areas inadvisable. The U.S. should ensure that the fullest possible Allied discussions of the proposed withdrawals take place. American officials should be prepared to furnish a more appropriate symbol of U.S. commitment to Atlantic defense if Alliance cohesion appears to be seriously threatened by the withdrawals. At the same time, the United States should make every effort to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons to other Alliance members. If the new LRINFs are to remain in Italy or England, it is important that they be properly integrated into the command and control structure which is designed for strategic, not theater, weapons.

The Alliance consultation process initiated by Jimmy Carter, or some similar process, should become
standard procedure within the Alliance. Promises to expand conventional capabilities must be implemented. The United States is likely to continue its predominant position in the Allied nuclear equation; consequently, American policymakers must be prepared to lead the way toward a shift in focus to non-nuclear options. Unless European confidence in the U.S. nuclear commitment can be enhanced, the focus of military debate and action within the Alliance will continue to be on nuclear issues. The Europeans must be allowed greater participation in nuclear decisions, because if confidence cannot be built within a consultative framework, the European Allies are almost certain to continue seeking reassurances through requests for additional nuclear hardware.
FOOTNOTES


DEFINITIONS OF COMMONLY USED TERMS

Circular Error Probable (CEP): a unit of measurement used to describe a delivery system's accuracy. The CEP number indicates the radius within which at least 50 percent of the delivery systems are expected to fall.

Cruise Missile: an airbreathing, low flying, subsonic missile. Technology for the cruise dates from the V-1 used by Germany in World War II.

Deterrence: policies designed to prevent aggression by convincing a potential enemy that the negative consequences of aggression outweigh any advantages which might be gained by it.

Dual-Key: an Allied provision for the physical control of nuclear weapons. No European ally has sole possession of U.S. nuclear devices; U.S. permission, together with the physical release of the weapon to the Ally, would have to be given before the Ally could launch the weapon.

Escalation Control: maintenance at each level of escalation of sufficient weapons to deter enemy escalation to that level.

Forward Strategy: a basic NATO defense tenet which asserts that Soviet aggression must be met as far east as possible.

General Purpose Forces: in most contexts, conventional and tactical nuclear forces.

Intermediate Nuclear Force: designation used by NATO since 1981 to describe Theater Nuclear Forces. Since 1981 NATO documents have used the INF designation rather than the TNF acronym. On some NATO documents the designation has been changed retroactively.

Long-Range Theater Nuclear Force (LRTNF): in general, theater nuclear forces with a range of over 1,500 kilometers.

Nuclear Threshold: the theoretical dividing line between conventional and nuclear war. The higher the threshold, the less likely that a conventional war will escalate to a nuclear one.
Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs): weapons systems designed with targeting components which assure at least a 50 percent chance of hitting enemy targets. The PGM designation is most commonly used in the classification of small, battlefield weapons.

Second Strike: a nuclear counter-strike made in response to an initial strike by enemy nuclear forces.

Tactical Nuclear Weapon: in general, nuclear weapons may be said to be tactical if their use is directly related to specific battlefield situations.

Theater Nuclear Weapons (TNFs): nuclear weapons designed to be used within a theater of action in order to achieve results related to theater operations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACDA</td>
<td>Arms Control and Disarmament Agency</td>
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<td>ALCM</td>
<td>Air Launched Cruise Missile</td>
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<td>ERW</td>
<td>Enhanced Radiation Weapon</td>
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<td>GLCM</td>
<td>Ground Launched Cruise Missile</td>
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<td>HLG</td>
<td>High Level Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICBM</td>
<td>Intercontinental Ballistic Missile</td>
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<td>IISS</td>
<td>International Institute for Strategic Studies</td>
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<td>INF</td>
<td>Intermediate Nuclear Force</td>
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<td>IRBM</td>
<td>Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile</td>
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<tr>
<td>LTDP</td>
<td>Long Term Defense Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>LRINF</td>
<td>Longer Range Intermediate Nuclear Force</td>
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<td>LRTNF</td>
<td>Long Range Theater Nuclear Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLF</td>
<td>Multilateral Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NPG</td>
<td>Nuclear Planning Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>QRA</td>
<td>Quick Reaction Alert</td>
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<td>SALT</td>
<td>Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCAD</td>
<td>Subsonic Cruise Armed Decoy</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCM</td>
<td>Strategic Cruise Missile</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Special Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLBM</td>
<td>Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNW</td>
<td>Theater Nuclear Weapon</td>
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