

# US nuclear warplans fly around the internet

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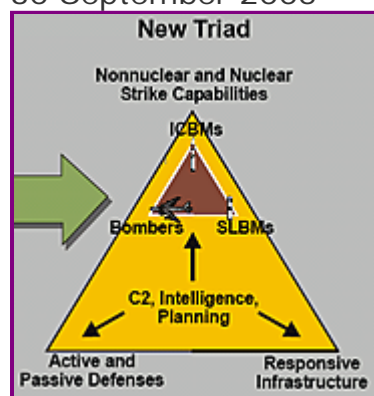


Illustration explaining the convergence of nuclear and non-nuclear options for Pentagon war planning.

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Washington, DC, United States — "Even in an unclassified world this is not the kind of thing you want flying around the Internet," says Pentagon spokesman Lawrence DiRita. He was talking about a document, yanked from a Pentagon website on September 19th, which outlines US nuclear warfighting plans, including the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons and the use of nukes in conventional war.

[Comments to the document by the various military branches](#) reveal squabbling about who gets to run a nuclear war, a disagreement about the legality of pre-emptive warfighting strategies, and a discussion of the etiquette of alerting allied troops that a nuclear attack is coming their way.

This is exactly the kind of information which we believe *ought* to be flying around the internet; these guys really shouldn't be left alone to talk about this stuff behind closed doors.

So we took our copy and uploaded it [here at www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org). You can help ensure it flies around the internet some more by [sending this article to a friend](#).

Nuclear war: it's not just for breakfast anymore

The document is a rare unpolished look at how the Cold War doctrine of nuclear first strike - previously spun as "deterrence" - has taken on a new dimension.

It reveals that the threshold for actually using nuclear weapons has been lowered dramatically.

And it outs the untruth of George Bush claiming that the US is reducing the importance of its nuclear arsenal.

For instance, the document condones pre-emptive nuclear strikes against nations (even those without nuclear weapons) which the US government *thinks* might use chemical or biological weapons against US forces or allies. The document also condones the use of nuclear weapons as just another item in the warfighting toolbox, and underscores the importance of US troops being able to continue functioning in a highly irradiated battle zone.

The document has excellent, practical advice on how to deal with situations like a nuclear foe who might retaliate with nuclear weapons:

**"Executing a nuclear option, or even a portion of an option, should send a clear signal of United States' resolve. Hence, options must be selected very carefully and deliberately so that the attack can help ensure the adversary recognizes the "signal" and should therefore not assume the United States has escalated to general nuclear war, although that perception cannot be guaranteed."**

It's comforting to know that the Pentagon recognises that nuclear weapons are very, very bad at conveying nuanced messages. Perhaps if they accompanied the attack with a thoughtful card, that would help make their meaning clear?

Fission vision sparks division

However, editing notes show internal disagreement amongst US military commanders. The disputes are over the document's enthusiasm for using nuclear weapons in attacks on infrastructure which would inevitably lead to massive civilian casualties. Some commanders expressed extreme doubts over both the legality of the new nuclear doctrine, and that the threats used to justify this new doctrine actually exist.



Fortunately, the document isn't final until that paragon of military restraint, Donald Rumsfeld, says it makes sense to him. Unfortunately, Rummy delegates this kind of policy-making to his alter-ego, Dr. Strangelove.

The US strategic command, STRATCOM, which directs nuclear warfighting commented "Many operational law attorneys do not believe "countervalue" targeting is a lawful justification for employment of force, much less nuclear force. Countervalue philosophy makes no distinction between purely civilian activities and military-related activities and could be used to justify deliberate attacks on civilians and non-military portions of a nation's economy... For example, under the countervalue target philosophy, the attack on the World Trade Centre Towers on 9/11 could be justified."

Since it's not illegal, it must be ok

In a chilling finale, "Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations" concludes that "no customary or conventional international law prohibits nations from employing nuclear weapons in armed conflict."

Greenpeace disarmament campaigner William Peden said, "This document should send a shiver down the spine of everyone. It shows that the highest levels of the Pentagon have undergone a major shift in thinking and now view nuclear weapons no longer as a weapon of last resort but

a weapon that can and should be used."

"This means a US military machine prepared to use nuclear weapons first, against non-nuclear countries and non-military-related, civilian targets."

## **Make sure the Pentagon's plans for nuclear war fly around the internet**

- [Nuclear warfighting plans concern all of us -- they shouldn't be kept secret. Help ensure that these unclassified documents are exposed to plenty of sunlight by sending this article to a few friends.](#)

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