

CONPLAN 8022: Nuclear Pre-Emptive War Doctrine

Details of a new U.S. “global strike” plan appeared in the *Washington Post* on May 15, 2005, in a column by William Arkin, a former Army Intelligence analyst. *EIR*, as we reported in our May 27 issue, interviewed several senior U.S. intelligence officials, who confirmed the essential features of Arkin’s report.

The Arkin article offered a chronology of the recent steps taken by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, on the road to pre-emptive nuclear war. This updated an *EIR* timeline of the Bush-Cheney Administration’s drive to pre-emptive nuclear war, which was published on March 7, 2003. That original story tagged John Bolton as a pivotal player in the drive to end a quarter-century American policy of no first nuclear strike against any non-nuclear power. It traced the origins of the pre-emptive nuclear war policy to the early 1990s and then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, who launched a plan to include “mini-nukes” in the conventional arsenal.

Arkin’s article continues the chronology from mid-2004: “Early last summer,” Arkin wrote, “Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld approved a top secret ‘Interim Global Strike Alert Order’ directing the military to assume and maintain readiness to attack hostile countries that are developing weapons of mass destruction, specifically Iran and North Korea. . . . In the secret world of military planning, global strike has become the term of art to describe a specific pre-emptive attack. When military officials refer to global strike, they stress its conventional elements. Surprisingly, however, global strike also includes a nuclear option, which runs counter to traditional U.S. notions about the defensive role of nuclear weapons.”

Arkin traced the Global Strike schema to a January 2003 classified Presidential Directive, in which President Bush defined a “full-spectrum” global strike as “a capability to deliver rapid, extended range, precision kinetic

(nuclear and conventional) and non-kinetic (elements of space and information operations) effects in support of theater and national objectives.” Along the way, the Strategic Command (STRATCOM), headquartered at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Neb., which formerly had been exclusively responsible for America’s nuclear weapons triad, was merged with the Space Command, and given responsibility for global operations involving both nuclear and conventional weapons.

Already, the September 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States, for the first time, had codified the doctrine of pre-emptive war, stating that the U.S. “must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies.” STRATCOM then established an interim global strike division, to devise plans by the end of 2002.

Arkin reported that “CONPLAN 8022-22 was completed in November 2003, putting in place for the first time a pre-emptive and offensive strike capability, against Iran and North Korea. In January 2004, [Adm. James O.] Ellis certified Stratcom’s readiness for global strike to the Defense Secretary and the President.”

Arkin warned, “This blurring of the nuclear/conventional line, wittingly or unwittingly, could heighten the risk that the nuclear option will be used.” He then detailed elements of CONPLAN 8022, which could involve the use of nuclear bunker busters, to take out hardened command structures and WMD depots in Iran or North Korea. CONPLAN 8022 could be activated if the U.S. determined there was an imminent threat of a nuclear attack, or “for a more generic attack on an adversary’s WMD infrastructure.”

“The global strike plan,” Arkin wrote, “holds the nuclear option in reserve if intelligence suggests an ‘imminent’ launch of an enemy nuclear strike on the United States or if there is a need to destroy hard-to-reach targets.” COMPLAN 8022 does not envision “boots on the ground,” he said, but combines precision weapons attacks with commando-style short-term operations, thus vastly reducing the time required to stage and launch an attack.

—Jeffrey Steinberg