August 24, 1977	PD-18 ("US National Strategy") established general strategic targeting policy and directed SecDef to undertake a review of targeting policy. Pending that review, the US was to continue to use its nuclear forces according to NSDM 242. (State did not participate in the ensuing study.)
June 1, 1978	State received copy of Phase I report of the Targeting Policy Review, already approved by SecDef.
July 14, 1978	State provided unsolicited informal comments to DoD on the Phase I Report. (State received no response to these comments and did not participate in Phase II.)
November 28, 1978	SecDef sends finished Policy Review (Phases I & II) to President, copy to SecState
April 4, 1979	SCC Meeting, initial interagency discussion of broad targeting issues: industry, population, hard target kill
April 25, 1979	SCC Meeting, consisting of four briefings, no discussion.
April 26, 1979	SCC Meeting, discussion of full range of targeting issues: China, "regionalization," hard target kill, launch under attack

Note: We received a summary of conclusions only for the first SCC meeting; we received nothing after the subsequent meetings. As a result of this series of meetings, DoD was directed to prepare specific proposals for Presidential consideration on: China, targeting leadership, "regionalization," targeting war-supporting industry, strategic stability. Over the past year, State made several requests for involvement in and information about the follow-on work. Defense (Slocombe) "noted" State's requests. State received none of the analyses.

Concerning preparation of the PD, our understanding is that it was drafted in the NSC, working with OSD (and, we assume, senior levels of JCS). Our best estimate is that the PD was signed about two weeks ago. We understand that the original intention was not to publizize this until later this month, though we think that the backgrounding was done by the NSC staff.

ACDA's only participation was at the three SCC meetings in 1979.

~~TOP SECRET~~

US Strategic Nuclear Targeting Policy

This paper reviews the new US strategic nuclear targeting policy in two steps:

- A summary of the principal changes in emphasis required by the new policy.

- The key implications of these changes for such things as deterrence, US force acquisition policy, stability, leadership targeting, and foreign policy.

The New Policy's Changes in Emphasis

We have not seen a copy of PD-59, but understand that it is virtually identical to Secretary Brown's earlier statements on this subject. We conclude that despite all the fanfare, PD-59 does not represent a truly new policy. It instead formalizes the evolution in American strategic thinking that has taken place over the last six years both in and out of government.

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Then-Defense Secretary Schlesinger called for such a strategy in 1974 and used it as his rationale for the [redacted] changes to Minuteman III. Secretary Brown's Annual Reports to Congress for the last two years have talked about a "countervailing strategy" involving counterforce targeting. Last year's MX decision was accompanied by official rhetoric on the need to be able to target Soviet forces and political leadership. Indeed, we have always included Soviet military targets in our plans.

There are, however, some changes in emphasis. The most important ones are:

- Greater emphasis on targeting Soviet nuclear forces, non-nuclear forces, [redacted]

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- More flexibility to attack these military targets discretely.

There will probably be some accompanying reductions in coverage of urban-industrial targets, although if the change were implemented slowly, increased military targeting could result from planned increases in warheads (ALCM and MX).

In any case, the increased flexibility to attack military targets will mean that we can execute strikes against Soviet military targets without having to launch a general nuclear attack. This ability is based on the development of smaller targeting "packages" (or, "limited options") than were previously embodied in the SIOP.

Implications of These Changes

The main rationale behind the changes was the belief that deterrence would be strengthened if the Soviets knew we had the means and the plans selectively to attack military targets because:

- Our threats of nuclear retaliation against urban targets might not be credible to the Soviets during a time of strategic nuclear parity, because our own population centers would be at risk.

- Some Soviet leaders might be more deterred by counter-military capability, because it would mean that they could not "win" a nuclear war.

We believe that there is merit to these points, but that there are also risks associated with the changes in targeting and declaratory policy: the Soviets might come to believe that we would not plan to attack urban-industrial targets, or at least that we are so averse to such targeting that we are developing options to avoid it. This could reduce deterrence. However, because the Soviets themselves stress warfighting, it is hard to argue that the US should eschew altogether the policies which the Soviets apparently view as strategically important.

Given both the logic and the pitfalls for deterrence of moving toward a policy with greater emphasis on selectivity and military targeting, a key question is how far to move in that direction--i.e., what sort of balance is maintained. We do not know how much real change is intended. The extent of change depends on such things as: [redacted] the degree of emphasis the changes receive in our declaratory policy; whether our forces could execute the demanding counter-military attacks.

Depending on the magnitude of the shift in policy, it could require substantially greater military capabilities than we have now, especially quick-response hard-target capabilities. Large numbers of highly accurate systems are needed if hard ICBM silos and communications centers are to be attacked. Ballistic missiles with their short flight times are also needed to have the best chance of catching Soviet military forces before they are launched (e.g., ICBMs, bombers) or redeployed (e.g., ground forces, ships in port).

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We probably have already programmed enough strategic offensive forces to carry out the new policy, though the policy could be used to justify expanded or accelerated programs or to help secure support from programs already planned. The key uncertainty is whether additional counter-military capability is needed (e.g., whether 200 MX would be enough, whether Trident II is needed).

Stability could be affected. Our new targeting policy and the forces to execute it could give the US an effective first strike capability against Soviet land-based strategic forces. This would be especially troublesome for the Soviets, because about 70% of their warheads are in fixed ICBMs, vs [redacted] of ours. The Soviets could respond in ways that could reduce crisis stability:

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- They could move farther towards a launch-on-warning which would increase the risk of accidental war.

- They might feel pressures to attack first in a crisis. They could be in a position where they had to "use them or lose them."

Arms race stability could also be affected: if large new US military programs are required, they might stimulate additional Soviet programs.

These concerns about stability require three caveats:

- The MX decision probably had a greater impact on Soviet perceptions and concerns than will our declaration about targeting policy.

- To the degree that we stress that we have a more flexible but still balanced strategy (i.e., large attacks on non-military targets remain important) and that we haven't made a fundamental shift, there will be less basis for concern.

- Finally, since the Soviets stress these same policies in their capabilities and probably in their plans, we cannot assume that they will suspect us of intentions any more sinister than their own.

The new policy's emphasis on attacking

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On the other hand, there may be disadvantages:

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Finally, the changes could also have a direct impact on foreign policy in several respects.

Regarding NATO, Allied military leaders are likely to appreciate the logic behind the changes. However, there could be problems:

- Allied leaders may feel that there was inadequate consultation before the decision. Secretary Brown had led them to believe that the changes were minor, but the changes are being described as significant in the press. Also, we did not give them a heads-up on the exact timing of release of a controversial story.

- The Soviets are likely to launch a propaganda campaign directed at NATO, arguing that this policy change provides additional evidence of US recklessness (as they did after the recent false alerts). They may try to use the changes to raise new European doubts about the TNF modernization decision.

• Some Europeans will worry about what they see as an increasingly anti-Soviet tone of US foreign and military policy.

• Because of their exposed position in a US-Soviet conflict, the Europeans generally find it hard to come to grips with notions of nuclear warfighting. This could add to the stresses and strains we encounter in maintaining general Allied support for our theater nuclear doctrine and forces.

The current timing is particularly bad in light of the NPT Review Conference which will be held this September. The new US policy is likely to be criticized there.

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Summary State Views

There are both advantages and disadvantages to PD-59's policy changes. We believe that they make sense as long as balance is maintained. It is unfortunate that the policy has been portrayed in public as a major shift in doctrine. This may increase the disadvantages to deterrence and foreign policy without enhancing the principal potential advantage, which is to convince the Soviets that we are not totally dependent on the threat of retaliating massively against Soviet population and industry.