

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 21, 1987

NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 281UNITED STATES NUCLEAR WEAPONS COMMAND AND CONTROL (2)

Assured, integrated, flexible, secure, responsive, and enduring command and control of all United States nuclear weapon operations is of paramount importance to the national security of the United States. Effective command and control of nuclear weapon operations will contribute to the maintenance of deterrence by assuring authorized use of nuclear weapons when directed; it will also contribute to the maintenance of stability and safety by assuring against unauthorized or inadvertent use of nuclear weapons. I am issuing this directive to ensure that the United States continues to maintain effective command and control of nuclear weapon operations by building systematically on present capabilities. (U)

In the past, policies concerning command and control for nuclear weapon operations have existed in various forms and places. This document is a codification of these policies into a comprehensive national nuclear command and control policy to ensure more effective command and control for nuclear weapon operations. (U)

General Provisions

Objective. It is the objective of this Directive to provide the basis for the attainment and maintenance of an assured, fully integrated, flexible, secure, responsive, and enduring nuclear command and control system (NCCS) that will provide me, in my role as Commander in Chief, with all capabilities required to exercise my authority and direction over nuclear weapon operations of military forces and all government activities and multinational activities that support those nuclear weapon operations. For the purposes of this NSDD the term nuclear command and control (NC2) will be used to mean only command and control of United States nuclear weapons as specifically defined below. (U)

Policy. This Directive sets forth the policies for the United States NCCS and delineates associated responsibilities for implementation. The head of each Department, Agency or Activity

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of the Federal Government with NC2 responsibilities shall issue such guidance, rules, and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the functions assigned under this Directive. (U)

Definitions. For the purpose of this Directive, the following terms shall have these meanings: (U)

(1) Nuclear command and control (NC2) is the exercise of authority and direction by the President, as Commander in Chief, through established command lines, over nuclear weapon operations of military forces; as Chief Executive over all government activities that support those operations; and as Head of State over required multinational actions that support those operations. (U)

(2) The NCCS is the designated combination of flexible and enduring elements including facilities, equipment, communications, procedures, personnel, and the structure in which these elements are integrated, all of which are essential for planning, directing, and controlling nuclear weapon operations of military forces and the activities that support those operations. (U)

(3) "President" as used in this directive, includes an official who succeeds to the Office of the Presidency under the Constitution and under 3 U.S.C. 19, as well. (U)

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(5) Positive measures are those measures taken expressly for the purpose of ensuring the control, safety, or security of nuclear weapons. (U)

Management. The management approach to United States NC2 shall ensure that all aspects of the NCCS are managed as an effective entity and that the policies and procedures set forth in this Directive and derivative guidance are carried out. The management effort shall be guided by the need both for ensuring use of nuclear weapons when authorized by the President and for preventing their unauthorized use; and for an appropriate balance between these objectives should a circumstance arise when they are in conflict. (U)

System Architecture. Beginning with the present NC2 processes, an end-to-end NCCS architecture shall be developed, implemented, and maintained that: (U)

(1) Integrates the NC2 processes in the stockpile-to-

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target life cycle of nuclear weapons through all environments, both to ensure use of nuclear weapons when authorized by the President and to prevent their unauthorized use. (U)

(2) Defines essential system elements and guides their development, acquisition, and maintenance. (U)

(3) Integrates a combination of survivable and enduring elements for maximum performance and efficiency. (U)

(4) Provides for command and control of nuclear weapon operations and all required support throughout the entire spectrum of peacetime, exercise and training, crisis, conventional and nuclear war, war termination, and postwar periods, and against all postulated threats. (U)

(5) Allows for change and growth in response to changes in the environment, including threats, technological innovations, procedures, and policy. (U)

(6) Provides for positive measures designed both to ensure use of nuclear weapons when authorized by the President and to prevent their unauthorized or inadvertent use; and to achieve the appropriate balance between these objectives should a circumstance arise when they are in conflict. (U)

(7) Provides for a realistic capability to exercise and test, and to measure and assess effectively the total NCCS. (U)

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Organizational Support. All organizations with NC2 responsibilities shall pursue system improvements through continued review and examination of procedural and technological opportunities for application within the requirements of the NCCS architecture. (U)



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Equipment. NCCS equipment shall be as modern and secure as possible in order that it can perform its designated function(s). The application of new technologies for this equipment shall not be such that human interface is denied. Specific policies

regarding nuclear weapons are covered below. For other equipment, the following policies shall apply: (U)

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(3) Technological advances shall be utilized to their fullest extent in ensuring NC2 equipment is able to perform all its required functions in response to evolving threats. (U)

(4) Where operational or security considerations restrict the use of NC2 equipment for training or exercise, a capability shall be developed to simulate that equipment. (U)

Communications. All communications utilized in support of the NCCS shall be secure, robust, and provide for: (U)

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Procedures. NCCS procedures shall, as a minimum, support: (U)

(1) The implementation of the President's authority for employment of United States nuclear weapons or termination of nuclear operations as well as the transfer for use, or when appropriate, the return of United States nuclear weapons by Allies. Further, these procedures shall support those personnel required to implement such direction. (U)

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(6) The implementation of and adherence to nuclear weapon safety and security standards. (U)

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(11) Actions to include realistic training and exercise at all levels to ensure that nuclear weapon systems and NC2 elements are maintained at an appropriate degree of readiness or generation. (U)

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(16) Continuing self assessment against all existing and emerging threats as well as technological opportunities. (U)

Personnel. Personnel assigned to designated NC2 positions at all levels shall be fully qualified, have a special background (SBI) or equivalent security investigation completed, and have their reliability verified prior to assignment to the position. The reliability of such personnel shall be routinely verified throughout the period of assignment to the nuclear command and control positions. (U)

Designated NC2 positions shall receive priority manning from all responsible organizations. Only fully trained and certified personnel shall be assigned primary NC2 duties. Initial and continuous training at all levels shall include realistic NC2 system simulation and exercise. Operations and communications security measures shall be emphasized. (U)

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Structure. The NCCS structure shall integrate all elements of the system in order to ensure their flexibility and endurance and to maximize their synergism. It shall also provide for realistic exercise and test, and effective measurement and assessment of the total NCCS. (U)

Nuclear Weapons Provisions. Because of the unique role nuclear weapons have in maintaining deterrence, the following policies shall apply to all facets of their life cycle: (U)

(1) Measures shall be taken during all phases of nuclear weapon design, production, deployment, and maintenance to assure the highest possible reliability of those weapons. (U)

(2) Positive measures shall be taken to ensure the safety of nuclear weapons during all phases of their life cycle, to prevent a nuclear yield by a weapon involved in an accident or incident; and to prevent an inadvertent prearming, arming, launching, firing, or releasing of a nuclear weapon under any circumstance. (U)

(3) Positive measures shall be taken to ensure the complete physical control of nuclear weapons during all phases of their life cycle, specifically to prevent a deliberate prearming, arming, launching, firing, or releasing of a nuclear weapon, except when authorized by the President. (U)

(4) Protection against physical damage shall be afforded nuclear weapons during storage, movement, and, to the extent feasible, alert. The level of protection shall be commensurate with the need to maintain the capability to execute and terminate operations involving United States nuclear weapons. (U)

(5) Positive measures shall be taken to maintain control of all nuclear weapons, strategic and non-strategic, during all phases of their life cycle. These measures shall ensure use of nuclear weapons only when authorized and directed by the President and prevent their unauthorized use, and to achieve an appropriate balance between these objectives should a circumstance arise when they are in conflict. Furthermore, these measures shall be consistent with operational requirements and shall continually be assessed against all existing and emerging threats as well as technological opportunities. (U)

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Implementation

Organization. Nuclear weapons are and will continue to be a special class of weapon in the United States arsenal. It is imperative that a comprehensive and coherent approach be taken in regard to the management and command and control of these weapons. The NC2 system is essential for directing and controlling nuclear operations of military forces and all United States government activities that support these operations. The organization and operational concept for the improved management of resources that comprise the NC2 system and their integration is as outlined below. (U)

Nuclear Command and Control System. There is hereby established the Nuclear Command and Control System. The purpose of the NCCS shall be to provide the President with all capabilities required to exercise his authority over nuclear weapon operations. The NCCS shall meet the objectives and be consistent with the policies stated in this Directive. To further this mission and the NCCS objectives, there shall be an NC2 management structure

consisting of the Executive Agent and the Director, NCCS Support Staff. (U)

Executive Agent. The Secretary of Defense is designated as the Executive Agent for the NCCS. The Executive Agent shall: (U)

(1) Designate the Director, NCCS Support Staff and ensure the management structure is functional within 120 days from the effective date of this Directive. (U)

(2) Ensure that the NCCS Support Staff conducts unified planning in order to coordinate NC2 research, development, acquisition, and integration of a system architecture for effective and responsive command and control for nuclear weapons. (U)

(3) Ensure that the activities of the NCCS Support Staff are conducted in conjunction and closely coordinated with the Executive Office of the President and Federal Government Departments and Agencies having NC2 responsibilities; as well as allied governments, where appropriate, as outlined herein. (U)

(4) In consultation with relevant agencies, recommend to the President the assignment of specific NC2 responsibilities to Federal Government Departments, Agencies and Activities as well as changes in the composition or structure of the NCCS. (U)

(5) Oversee the activities of the Director, NCCS Support Staff and provide personnel for administrative support of an NCCS Support Staff composed of personnel as required from Department of Defense, and other government Departments and Agencies. (U)

(6) Ensure that the NCCS Support Staff possesses the capability to assess and monitor, on a continuing basis, the NCCS. (U)

Executive Office of the President. The responsibilities required of the Executive Office of the President by this Directive shall be focused in the National Security Council, the White House Military Office, and the Office of Management and Budget. (U)

National Security Council. The NSC shall provide national policy oversight and guidance for NC2 matters to the Executive Agent, Executive Departments, Agencies, and other federal activities with NC2 responsibilities. The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs shall: (U)

(1) Serve as the NSC focal point on NC2 matters. (U)

(2) Serve as the interface with national continuity of government efforts as they support the NCCS. (U)

(3) Develop, coordinate and provide policy guidance to the White House Military Office and other agencies concerning

survival of the Office of the President and its essential functions. (U)

White House Military Office. The Director, White House Military Office shall: (U)

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Office of Management and Budget. The Director, Office of Management and Budget, in consultation with the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Executive Agent and the Director, NCCS Support Staff, shall prescribe general guidelines and procedures for reviewing the funding of the NCCS. These guidelines and procedures may provide mechanisms for funding, through the budget process, those portions of the NCCS which affect multiple Departments, Agencies, CINCs, Services, or entities. (U)

Department of Defense. In addition to the other responsibilities assigned by this Directive, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff shall: (U)

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(5) Compete for funding those portions of the NCCS which are the responsibility of the DOD through the normal DOD budget process. (U)

(6) Designate critical NC2 facilities and ensure they meet criteria stipulated by or resulting from this Directive. (U)

(7) Designate critical NC2 equipment and ensure that the Military Departments and Defense Agencies develop and maintain it to meet the criteria stipulated by or resulting from this Directive. The Department of Energy shall assist the Department of Defense in carrying out this responsibility. (U)

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(11) Develop, implement, and maintain plans, procedures, and the capability to support United States nuclear weapon employment policy. (U)

(12) In coordination with the Department of Energy, develop, implement, and maintain nuclear weapon survivability, safety, security and control standards as directed in other parts of this Directive. (U)

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(15) Develop, implement, and maintain the plans and procedures to ensure that NC2 elements are maintained at an appropriate degree of readiness and generation. (U)

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(17) Designate NC2 positions within the Department of Defense that will receive priority manning. Individuals assigned to specific positions, as outlined under "Personnel" above, shall be the subject of SBI or equivalent security investigations and body fluid and counterintelligence polygraph testing. Members of the NCCS Support Staff and other individuals with NC2 responsibilities not meeting the criteria set forth under "Personnel" above, shall be designated for SBI or equivalent security investigations and may be subjected to tests of body fluids for drug usage and to counter-intelligence polygraph examinations. (U)

(18) In conjunction with the Department of Energy, as appropriate, develop, implement, and maintain positive measures to ensure the control, physical security and protection against physical damage, misuse and theft of all nuclear weapons and components at all times. (U)

(19) In coordination with the Departments of Justice, State, and Energy, the Director of Central Intelligence and other Agencies as appropriate, develop, implement, and maintain plans, procedures, and capabilities to recover lost, missing, or stolen nuclear weapons or components. (U)

Department of State. In addition to the other responsibilities assigned by this Directive, the Secretary of State shall: (U)

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(3) Provide personnel on a priority basis for liaison with the NCCS Support Staff. (U)

Department of Energy. In addition to the other responsibilities assigned by this Directive, the Secretary of Energy shall: (U)

(1) Provide for security, safety, and reliability of nuclear weapons and components in accordance with this Directive and appropriate DOE custody directives. (U)

(2) Conduct research and development on a broad range of safety, security, reliability, and control methods and devices for nuclear weapons. (U)

(3) Assist the Department of Defense in designating critical NC2 equipment and components and ensuring that they are developed to meet the criteria designated by this Directive. (U)

(4) In conjunction with the Department of Defense develop, implement, and maintain standards, plans, procedures and other measures, including equipment design, necessary to ensure nuclear weapon safety, security and reliability, as directed by this Directive. (U)

(5) Designate NC2 positions within the Department of Energy that will receive manning as specified in Part 2 of this Directive and provide personnel, on a priority basis, to the NCCS Support Staff. Individuals assigned to specific positions as outlined under "Personnel" above, shall be the subject of SBI or equivalent security investigations, as well as body fluid and counterintelligence polygraph testing. Other designated

personnel with NC2 responsibilities will be the subject of SBI or equivalent security investigations and tests of body fluids for drug usage and counterintelligence polygraphs. (U)

(6) Assist the Department of Defense to develop, implement, and maintain the plans, procedures, and capability to store and move nuclear weapons. (U)

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(2) In cooperation with the Department of Defense, develop and maintain a capability which can provide correlated strategic and tactical warning information to principal NC2 decisionmakers. (U)

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(5) Provide personnel, on a priority basis, for liaison with the NCCS Support Staff. (U)

Department of Justice. In addition to the other responsibilities assigned by this Directive, the Attorney General shall: (U)

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(3) Provide threat information to the Director, NCCS Support Staff. (U)

(4) Provide personnel, on a priority basis, for liaison with the NCCS Support Staff. (U)

(5) Assist other Agencies and Departments to provide SBI or equivalent security investigations as required by this Directive. (U)

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Previous Guidance.

Any Presidential guidance or direction previously issued with respect to United States nuclear command and control, to the extent inconsistent with this Directive, is hereby superseded. (U)

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