

Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Area of Nuclear Deterrence

Informal translation by the CNA Russia Studies Program

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Abstract

This is an informal working translation into English by the CNA Russia Studies Program of the Russian Federation document "Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Area of Nuclear Deterrence." The original Russian-language document was approved by decree N 355 of the President of the Russian Federation dated June 2, 2020, and is available at <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202006020040>.

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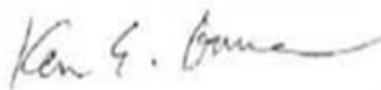


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Ken E. Gause, Research Program Director
Adversary Analytics Program
Strategy, Policy, Plans, and Programs Division

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Contents

I. General provisions.....	1
II. The essence of nuclear deterrence.....	3
III. Conditions for the transition of the Russian Federation to the employment of nuclear weapons	5
IV. Tasks and functions of the federal bodies of state authorities, other government bodies and organizations on the implementation of state policy in the nuclear deterrence area	6

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I. General provisions

1. These Foundations are a strategic planning document in the field of assuring defense and reflect official views on the essence of nuclear deterrence, define military dangers and threats for the neutralization of which nuclear deterrence is carried out, the principles of nuclear deterrence, as well as the conditions for the transition of the Russian Federation to the employment of nuclear weapons.

2. Guaranteed deterrence of a potential adversary from aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies is one of the highest state priorities. The deterrence of aggression is ensured by the totality of the military might of the Russian Federation, including nuclear weapons.

3. The state policy of the Russian Federation in the area of nuclear deterrence (hereafter referred to as state policy in the area of nuclear deterrence) is a set of coordinated, unified by a common concept¹ political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic, information, and other measures carried out relying on the forces and means of nuclear deterrence, to prevent aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies.

4. The state policy in the area of nuclear deterrence is of a defensive nature, aimed at maintaining the potential of nuclear forces at a level sufficient to ensure nuclear deterrence, and guarantees the protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, deterrence of a potential adversary from aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies, and in the event of an outbreak of a military conflict—the preclusion² of the escalation of military actions and their cessation on conditions acceptable to the Russian Federation and (or) its allies.

5. The Russian Federation views nuclear weapons exclusively as a means of deterrence, the use of which is an extreme and compelled measure,³ and is making all the necessary efforts to reduce the nuclear threat and not allow the aggravation of interstate relations that could provoke military conflicts, including nuclear ones.

¹ Translator note: “замысел” could also be translated as “plan” or “design.”

² Translator note: “недопущение” could also be translated as “prevention of,” but that carries a slightly different connotation than “предотвращение,” which is the Russian for “prevention” and is used earlier in this document.

³ Translator note: The Russian “крайней и вынужденной мерой” implies an absence of choice.

6. The normative-legal framework for these Foundations consists of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, generally accepted principles and norms of international law, international treaties of the Russian Federation in the field of defense and arms control, federal constitutional laws, federal laws, other regulatory legal acts and documents regulating defense issues and security.
7. The provisions of these Foundations are binding on all federal government authorities, other government bodies and organizations participating in the assurance of nuclear deterrence.
8. These Foundations may come to be clarified depending on external and internal factors affecting how defense may be assured.

II. The essence of nuclear deterrence

9. Nuclear deterrence is intended to ensure that the potential adversary understands the inevitability of retaliation in the event of aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies.

10. Nuclear deterrence is ensured by the presence in the structure of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation of combat-ready forces and means capable through the employment of nuclear weapons of guaranteed⁴ infliction of unacceptable damage on a potential adversary in any conditions of the environment, and also by the readiness and resolve of the Russian Federation to use such weapons.

11. Nuclear deterrence is carried out continuously in peacetime, during the period of direct threat of aggression, and in wartime, up to when nuclear weapons begin to be used.

12. The main military dangers, which, depending on the change in the military-political and strategic situation, can develop⁵ into military threats to Russian Federation (threats of aggression) for the neutralization of which nuclear deterrence is carried out, include:

(a) buildup by a potential adversary on territories neighboring the Russian Federation and its allies and adjacent waters of general purpose force groupings, which include means of nuclear delivery;

(b) deployment by states that consider the Russian Federation as a potential adversary of systems and means of missile defense, cruise and ballistic missiles of medium and short range, high-precision conventional and hypersonic weapons, unmanned combat aerial vehicles, and directed energy weapons;

(c) the creation and deployment in space of missile defense and strike systems;

(d) the possession among states of nuclear weapons and (or) other types of weapons of mass destruction that can be used against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies, as well as the means of delivery for these types of weapons;

(e) the uncontrolled proliferation of nuclear weapons, their means of delivery, technologies and equipment for their production;

(f) the deployment of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery on the territories of non-nuclear states.

⁴ Translator note: “гарантированно” could also be translated as “assured.”

⁵ Translator note: “перерасти” could also be translated as “escalate into.”

13. The Russian Federation carries out nuclear deterrence toward individual states and military coalitions (blocs, alliances) that consider the Russian Federation as a potential adversary and possess nuclear weapons and (or) other types of weapons of mass destruction or significant combat potential of general purpose forces.

14. In carrying out nuclear deterrence, the Russian Federation takes into account the deployment by a potential adversary on the territories of other states of offensive means (cruise and ballistic missiles, hypersonic aircraft, unmanned combat aerial vehicles), directed energy weapons, missile defense systems, means of warning about a nuclear missile strike, nuclear weapons, and (or) other types of weapons of mass destruction that can be used against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies.

15. The principles of nuclear deterrence include:

- (a) compliance with international arms control obligations;
- (b) the continuity of activities to ensure nuclear deterrence;
- (c) the adaptability of nuclear deterrence to military threats;
- (d) the uncertainty for the potential adversary of the scale, time, and place of possible employment of the means of forces and means of nuclear deterrence;
- (e) the centralization of state command over the activities of federal executive bodies and organizations, participating in the assurance of nuclear deterrence;
- (f) the rationality of the structure and composition of the forces and means of nuclear deterrence, as well as their maintenance at a level that is minimally sufficient for the fulfillment of the set tasks;
- (g) the maintenance of constant readiness of a select part of the forces and means of nuclear deterrence for combat employment.

16. The nuclear deterrence forces of the Russian Federation include land, sea, and air-based nuclear forces.

III. Conditions for the transition of the Russian Federation to the employment of nuclear weapons

17. The Russian Federation shall reserve the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction against it and (or) its allies, as well as in the event of aggression against the Russian Federation with the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is in jeopardy.⁶

18. The decision to use nuclear weapons is taken by the President of the Russian Federation.

19. The conditions that make it possible that Russia will employ nuclear weapons are:

(a) the receipt of reliable information about the launch of ballistic missiles attacking the territory of the Russian Federation and (or) its allies;

(b) the use by an adversary of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction on the territories of the Russian Federation and (or) its allies;

(c) adversary actions affecting critically important state or military objects of the Russian Federation, the disablement of which could lead to the disruption of retaliatory actions by nuclear forces;

(d) aggression against the Russian Federation with the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of state is in jeopardy.⁷

20. The President of the Russian Federation may, if necessary, inform the military-political leadership of other states and (or) international organizations about the readiness of the Russian Federation to use nuclear weapons, of a decision⁸ to use nuclear weapons, as well as of the fact of their use.

⁶ Translator note: We translated this to be consistent with the official translation of the 2014 Russian military doctrine, available at <https://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>. The original Russian “когда под угрозу поставлено само существование государства” could also be translated as “when the very existence of state is under threat.”

⁷ See previous translator note.

⁸ Translator note: “принятое решение” could also be translated as “a decision that has already been made.”

IV. Tasks and functions of the federal bodies of state authorities, other government bodies and organizations on the implementation of state policy in the nuclear deterrence area

21. The general management of state policy in the nuclear deterrence area is carried out by the President of the Russian Federation.

22. The Government of the Russian Federation implements measures on the realization of economic policies aimed at maintenance and development of nuclear deterrence means, and also forms and carries out external and informational policies in the nuclear deterrence area.

23. The Security Council of the Russian Federation forms the main directions of military policy in the nuclear deterrence area, and also coordinates the activities of federal executive bodies and organizations involved in the implementation of decisions adopted by the President of the Russian Federation pertaining to the assurance of nuclear deterrence.

24. The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, through the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, carries out direct planning and conduct of activities of organizational and military nature in the nuclear deterrence area.

25. Other federal executive bodies and organizations participate in carrying out decisions taken by the President of the Russian Federation, pertaining to the assurance of nuclear deterrence, in accordance with their authority.

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