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Strategy and Conventional-Nuclear Integration for the Navy

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Cold War History

- USN an active participant in development and testing of nuclear weapons in the Cold War.
- Led to extensive arsenal deployed at sea in support of nuclear strike operations that subsequently led to creation of the SIOP, or single integrated operational plan.
- Polaris, then Trident, now Columbia secured stability of balance of terror with invulnerable 2nd strike capability.



In July 1946 Navy tested two devices at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific, including a variety of surface ships to assess damage and effects.



21st Century Relevance?

- Multi-domain military operations are upon the USN: land, sea, air, cyber, space, information, nuclear, conventional.
- How does the USN fit into this framework?
- Cold War era behind us – but ways of thinking about relationship between domains is relevant.

Nuclear Weapons and the USN in the 21st Century

- Navy committed to nuclear program and weapons development in Columbia class submarine. Largest ongoing shipbuilding program.
- Other nuclear weapons – not so much.
- Removed from surface fleet at end of Cold War by President Bush.
- Integrated deterrence now cornerstone concept for all services.
- USN must define its place in multi-domain operations, to include the prospect that nuclear and conventional weapons may be integrated on the battlefield.



Columbia class remains a backbone of US strategic deterrent.

Geopolitics...

- Two principal US adversaries are nuclear armed: Russia and China, which retain a full range of tactical and strategic weapons.
- USN and its nuclear weapons remain part of the strategic deterrent framework, but its role in extended deterrent framework is less clear.



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